the weekly
Standard
JUNE 30, 2008
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ARE WE SAFER?
REUEL MARC GERECHT

WHEN BUBBA MEETS OBAMA

BY MATT LABASH

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The Coming Tax Hike—and How to Head it Off

Disrupting our economy while leaving the deficit virtually untouched? Not a good idea.

As the presidential campaign enters its endgame, expect more debate over budget priorities and how to pay for them. Do we need tax hikes to restore near-term budget balance and finance longer-term entitlement growth? In a word, no. Such claims fail both budget arithmetic and economic sense. Worse, they undercut the nation's fiscal policies and its commitment to economic growth.

Federal revenues are already high, yet we stand on the verge of a very large tax increase if the Bush tax cuts expire. The personal income tax burden would rise to its highest point in history, relative to GDP. Economic damage caused by the tax increases and tax-avoidance behavior would choke off any promised revenues (and, more immediately, hobble the eventual economic recovery). Meanwhile, the lure of higher revenues would sustain Congress's wasteful ways. A better idea is to fix entitlements to slow their cost growth, cut nonessential spending, and promote economic growth: the greater the growth, the larger the pie.

— By John F. Cogan and R. Glenn Hubbard

A Modest Proposal for Middle East Peace

How to get through to Israel? Let places such as Kashmir, Cyprus, and Tibet lead the way.

Maybe it's time for a new, global approach to Israel and its occupation. Let's get the whole world talking about disputed capitals, the right of return for refugees, land under occupation, the creation of artificial post–World War II states, and the use of force against suspected Islamist terrorists. But why not make it interesting? Let's look for solutions to apply everywhere, not just in Israel.

Perhaps the world could impose a big-power "road map" on long-divided Cyprus. Or relieve all displaced populations—the Germans expelled from East Prussia, this Indians uprooted from ancestral homes in what is now Pakistan, the half-million Jews deported from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria after 1967. Can we promise them all the right to return? Then there's lost territory—much of Azerbaijan taken by Armenia, Tibet swallowed up by China—and artificial states (should Pakistan even exist? North Korea?). Surely the world that solves these problems will have much to teach Israel about humility and concessions.

—Paul R. Gregory

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Moving to the Center

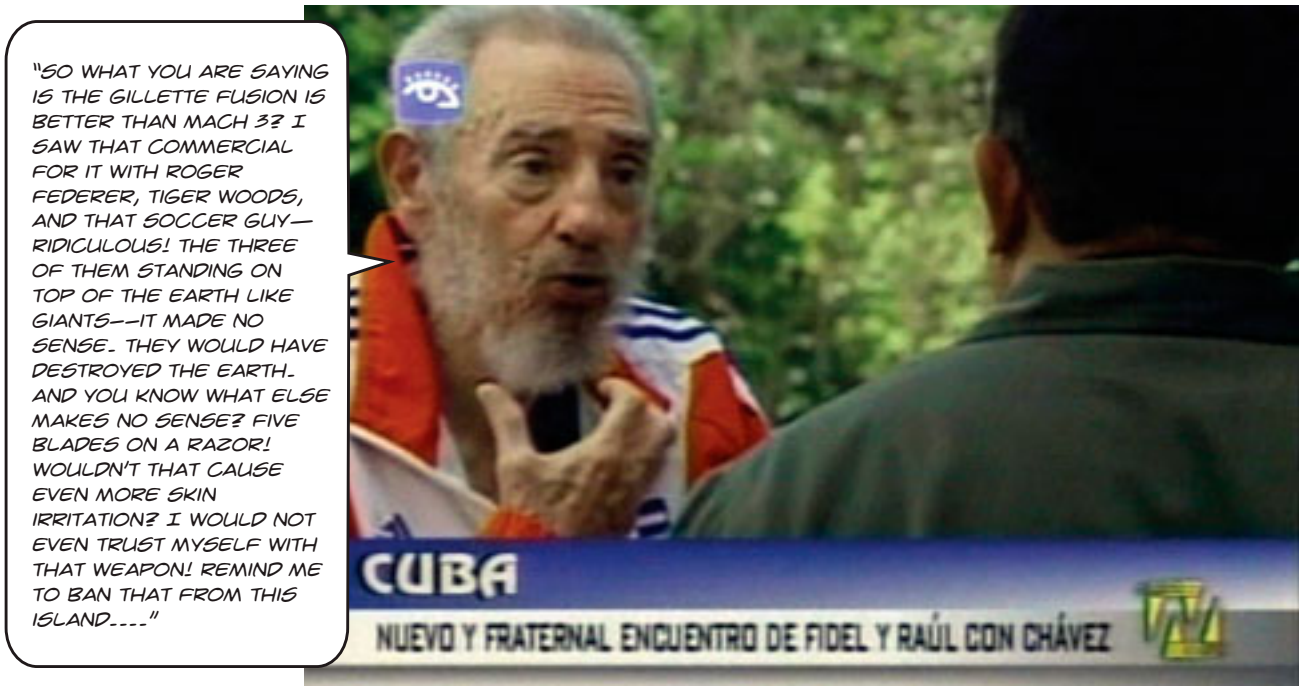
There's a splendid controversy brewing at the University of Chicago—at least we'll consider it splendid so long as it has a happy ending, which now seems likely. The U of C may be best known these days as home to the law school where Barack Obama used to lecture on constitutional law (twice a week!), but in simpler times it was most famous as the academic perch of the great free-market economist Milton Friedman, who died in 2006.

So when a prestigious university wants to name a research center after its most celebrated (Nobel prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom, etc., etc., etc.) professor, who could object? Well, lots of people—less celebrated professors mostly. Last week 101 full-time faculty members sent a letter to the university's president, Robert Zimmer, protesting the newly endowed Milton Friedman Institute, an on-campus think tank that will welcome visiting scholars doing research in economics and law. The committee that proposed the center, including three Nobel-winning economists, expects to raise $200 million for a permanent endowment.

President Zimmer met with a group of the objecting profs, but so far he's refusing to back down, as might be expected of a college president who suddenly finds himself within sniffing distance of $200 million. He and his allies insist that the Friedman center will have "no particular ideological slant," and we believe him. It's hard to imagine it will have anything as pronounced as the ideological slant of the vast majority of the school's other departments, where the standard-issue, off-the-shelf liberalism of the American professoriate holds sway.

Yet the profs show no sign of backing down either. Their letter last week was a loopy masterpiece of its kind, objecting that allowing the Friedman center on campus will reinforce "a perception that the university's faculty lack intellectual and ideological diversity." An interesting objection, isn't it? A university where all but a handful of professors are on the cultural and political left risks losing its "ideological diversity" if it endows a center named after a non-leftist. It's been a while since we've seen such a lovely expression of the topsy-turvy worldview of the people who teach our sons and daughters. ♦

What He Was Saying



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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of April 29, 2002)

Nature News

Despite our lack of an engineering degree, The Scrapbook feels a particular affinity with beavers—*Castor Canadensis*—and so was pleased to learn last week that a pair of European beavers are reported to have built what is believed to be the first beaver dam in England in hundreds of years. Beavers were hunted to extinction in England and Wales as long ago as the 12th century—both for their pelts and for castoreum, a secretion of their scent gland which was believed to have medicinal properties—but a dozen or so have been imported from Germany in the past few years, and with encouraging results.

Most live on lakes and have no need to build dams, but two were deposited at a private estate on the Tale River in East Devon last year, and according to its owner, "A year after they came . . . they have built a dam and we think they are breeding. . . . It really is a superb structure—quite a feat of engineering for two small beavers."

Perhaps "affinity" is the wrong word for The Scrapbook's attitude; it's really more like admiration. Beavers are the second largest variety of rodent in the world—the champion of the order is the capybara, native to South America—and easily recognized by their waterproof coats, shiny flat tails, and buck teeth.

But it's the beaver lifestyle that inspires respect. These quiet nocturnal creatures are industrious to a startling degree, friendly to humans, resourceful and versatile on land and water, and monogamous in their private lives. Natural conservatives, perhaps? And of course, they are the Frank Lloyd Wrights of the animal world: Introduce beavers to a river or stream, and soon a wooden/earthen dam appears, and then a multilevel lodge of mud and sticks, above and below the surface, housing infinite beaver generations. Beaver dams are beneficial to the ecology—creating wetlands, nurturing growth—and balm to anyone who strolls in the woods and stumbles on evidence of beaver habitation.

After hovering near extinction a century ago in North America, beavers are plentiful now and, as this latest report suggests, on the comeback trail in Europe as well. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Yes, there may be individuals in positions of great authority who call themselves 'conservatives,' and who have been accepted as such and even cheered on by the conservative movement for years. But now that their numbers are in the tank, it is plain that they are nothing of the sort. We know the right will respond this way because . . . "

—*Thomas Frank,*
Wall Street Journal, *June 18*

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Casual

It's Only a Hobby

I recently went to a new physician, a dermatologist, for a minor problem, but before seeing her, I had to fill out a longish form setting out my and my parents' medical history. All went smoothly enough until the very last question, which asked about my hobbies. I was frankly stumped. I have no hobbies, yet, chary of leaving the space blank, I wrote in "Cultivating and collecting grievances."

The absence of hobbies from my life, let me quickly assert, is not among these grievances. I never had a hobby, don't have one now, and the notion of finding a suitable hobby has never occurred to me.

The closest I have come is early in the 1950s, when I owned an extraordinarily comfortable pair of trousers known as hobby jeans. Light blue, soft cotton with a thick elastic waistband, they were essentially pajamas that could be worn on the street. Wearing them, I don't recall anyone asking me if he could see my butterfly collection.

In grammar school many of my classmates had hobbies and collections. Some boys had large collections of marbles, or "mibs," as we called them. A few kids had stamp collections. A store opened in our neighborhood called Hobby Models, which sold kits for making model airplanes, electric trains and the rich collection of paraphernalia that went with them, battery-driven racing cars, and all the other stuff that was supposed to interest a young boy but somehow left me indifferent.

Other boys my age could delicately wield an X-Acto blade across balsam to form the fuselage of a model plane. Some found hours of enjoyment in chemistry sets. A boy named Bob Grimm had an impressive collection of miniature cars. Many saved baseball cards, which, if in later life their wives didn't insist they pitch them out, may well be worth vast sums today. I had none of these things, I did none of these things, I had no need of any of these things. I lived, I now see, in that distant country known as my own mind, where no hobbies were required.

HAL MAYFORTH

I have over the years met people with some out of the way hobbies. I briefly had an editor, acclaimed for his genius in creating the bestseller *Jaws*, who kept bees in his basement in a brownstone on the west side of Manhattan. I have a friend who has a collection of 78-rpm records in excess of 150,000, more than half kept in the basement of his home, the rest in a warehouse. Most every night, after work, he checks into various used-record stores looking for still more. I know another man who pays a pit crew $16,000 on a weekend so that he can enter drag races for a purse of usually not more than $3,000. "It's only a hobby," as the punch line for an old Jewish joke has it.

One thinks of mature hobbies as pure diversion and calm-inducing: an older gentleman cultivating his prize-winning roses, a woman quilting with Mozart's flute and harp concerto playing in the background. A hobby sets off leisure from work, signaling a cooling dive into the pool of tranquility. The pleasure they bring to those who adore their hobbies is perhaps greater than any available to them in their working or family lives. They feel most alive in their hobbies; in them they claim to find their truest selves. I do not doubt that this is so.

Would my having a hobby make me more relaxed, a sweeter character generally? Possibly. But I have to wonder what such a hobby, for me, might be. Collecting matchbook covers? Designing my own clothes? Joining a fantasy football league? Performing complicated card tricks? Artfully photographing grass, sand, and leaves?

The *New York Times* used occasionally to run pieces called Newsmakers, which were profiles of men and women then prominently in the news. Accompanying the profile was a box which set out the main facts of their lives. "Hobbies" was among these facts. People usually used this rubric to establish themselves as cultivated. "Reading and long country walks" was not an uncharacteristic answer to the hobby question. I suppose I could count Reading as my hobby, but I read so much, it is so central to my existence, that, were I to do so, I might as well add Breathing as another of my hobbies.

I wonder if the problem isn't my vocation. A writer's life tends to be seamless, and he doesn't divide it between work and leisure. On the hunt full time for copy, material, something to write about, he doesn't need to collect anything, or play at anything. The writer's work and his play, if he is lucky, are one. How can he have a hobby, really, when the entire world is his hobby?

Joseph Epstein

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Congress should reject new energy taxes

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Obama's Neighbors

Kudos to Andrew Ferguson for capturing the essence of Barack Obama's Hyde Park in "Mr. Obama's Neighborhood" (June 16). Settled by abolitionist Paul Cornell in the 1850s, Hyde Park remained a suburb of Chicago until 1883, and, as Ferguson aptly describes, the city has been trying to corral it since.

My exposure to Hyde Park occurred during my high school days there and later at the University of Illinois at Chicago as a colleague of terrorist emeritus, Barack neighbor, and Hyde Park resident, William Ayers.

Like Ferguson says, "Hyde Park is different from any neighborhood in Chicago." Indeed, where else can a confessed terrorist living in the shadow of the world's Nobel laureate factory endorse for public office a neighbor who bought his home from a convicted felon while said neighbor taught at a prestigious neighborhood law school?

William O'Neill
Chicago, Ill.

I got a much bigger kick out of Andrew Ferguson's story on Hyde Park than my parents did. But as a born and raised southsider who grew up in that "suburb without cars," I feel obliged to point out that there are also those of us who went through the neighborhood's public school system and not only ended up Republicans, but longtime subscribers to The Weekly Standard as well.

Alec Dale
New York, N.Y.

Whither the Playpen?

Joseph Epstein's "The Kindergarchy" (June 9) may be looked upon as an outcry by a jealous old generation, his and mine, which knows best how to mold brats into responsible world leaders.

Epstein accurately reveals how political correctness has invaded the nursery, where babies reign and graze as they see fit, wrecking household valuables and destroying the nervous systems of their parents and other guardians.

One device that Epstein failed to mention always worked well in our generation. It is the playpen, which is indicted by the politically correct crowd as a prison for toddlers, solitary confinement which inhibits their precious development. The ACLU will get you and hurt you if you buy one and use it.

But in our day the playpen worked well to free parents from constant policing of

their nosy offspring. And rather than inhibit freedom, the playpen gave the child a sense of privacy once he became accustomed to it. "This is my world for a couple of hours," the kid says, free to play with my favorite toy or take a nap without the intrusion of the overbearing parent.

The overarching fault of raising children in a phony world free of inhibitions is a child who learns how to become a nervous adult by learning from his nerve-wracked parents.

John Hilferty
Moretown, Vt.

Duty, Honor, Country

There aren't many things that are perfect in life, but Mackubin Thomas Owens's thoughts regarding the relationship between the armed forces and civilian society are as close to perfect as I've ever seen or heard ("Americans Under Fire," May 26).

Toward the end of his review of *Moment of Truth in Iraq*, *House to House*, and *Hard Corps*, Owens writes: "[A] liberal democracy faces a dilemma when it comes to the relationship between the military and society at large: The military cannot govern itself in accordance with the liberal principles that it ultimately defends. It must be governed by virtues that many civilians see as brutal, and even barbaric, because the military is one of the few jobs where you may have to tell someone: 'Go die.' If we cannot count on members of the military to prepare for such an eventuality, the military will fail, and if it does fail, the liberal society it protects may not survive."

Would that those who have never served understood the relationship half as well.

Paul J. Ryan
Hudsonville, Mich.

Reading Owens's "Americans Under Fire," I am reminded of what I learned when I taught university courses to our military personnel for almost 12 years. Most of my students were male, and I have often had to remind my anti-war friends that there are many men who love military life.

When they are questioned about tasks they have had that seem to us terrifying or actually unreasonable, the standard answer is: "It was my job."

There is no doubt that the United States has the greatest military force in the world—and will continue to do so only so long as it is the home of warriors such as these.

Nancy Ann Holtz
Beverly, Mass.

• • •

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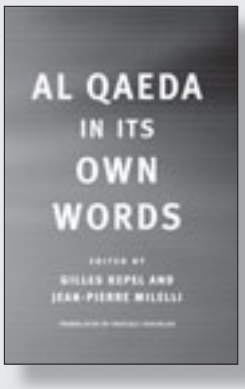

AL QAEDA IN ITS OWN WORDS

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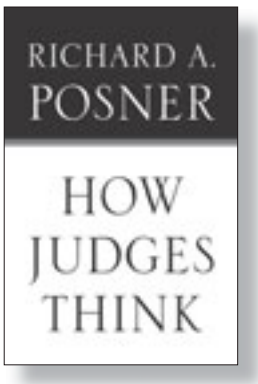

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the weekly Standard

Obama's Pooh-bah

"Winnie-the-Pooh *seems to me to be a fundamental text on national security.*"
—former Navy Secretary Richard Danzig,
one of Barack Obama's key foreign policy advisers, June 11

The gathering of oh-so-sober pro-Obama foreign policy experts was drowning in solemnity and earnestness. Speaker after speaker had laboriously dilated on the important distinction—unappreciated by the oh-so-stupid-and-bad Bush administration—between soft power and hard power. And this is to say nothing of the synthesis of soft and hard in . . . smart power!

Richard Danzig, the luncheon speaker, hoped to wake the slumberers from their torpor. So he took A.A. Milne rather than Joseph Nye as his fundamental text. As the basis of his criticism of the Bush administration, he read the famous opening sentences of *Winnie-the-Pooh*:

> Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump on the back of his head behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming down stairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping a minute and think about it.

The earnest Washington foreign policy types were dazzled by Danzig's daringly outside-the-box citation. How clever! And how true! If only Bush had stopped to think that there was "another way" to pursue our national security goals, rather than staying the course in Iraq, or detaining terrorists without habeas corpus at home. Alas! And really, isn't Bush also "a Bear of Very Little Brain"?

Or is he? Richard Danzig is an intelligent and well-read man. He's a graduate of Bronx High School of Science and Reed College, with a law degree from Yale and a Ph.D. from Oxford. He was a Supreme Court law clerk. He is well aware that, outside the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, al Qaeda has failed to launch successful attacks on Americans since 9/11. Couldn't Bush have been doing something right?

Indeed, Danzig served as Bill Clinton's secretary of the Navy from November 1998 to the end of that administration. During that time the U.S.S. *Cole* was attacked by al Qaeda, with 17 sailors killed and 39 wounded. So Danzig saw firsthand the insufficiency of the Clinton administration's efforts to prosecute the war on terror through the criminal justice system.

He therefore must know how foolish it is to say, as Barack Obama did last week, "I have confidence that our system of justice is strong enough to deal with terrorists." The lesson of the *Cole*, as of 9/11, was that "our system of justice" can't deal with terrorists as well as our military and intelligence services. And he must know that there really isn't a pain-free way to fight the war on terror very different from the way the Bush administration has chosen.

As for the war in Iraq, well . . . there Bush did find another way. In January 2007, he changed commanders and strategy. The new strategy, backed by a surge of troops, worked. Violence is way down, political reconciliation is proceeding, the additional troops are almost all back home—and progress has exceeded the hopes even of those who strongly supported the surge. Danzig is well aware that Obama's stated policy would snatch defeat in Iraq out of the jaws of victory.

But he's ostensibly an Obama adviser. What's the man to do? First proclaim the indispensability of *Winnie-the-Pooh* as a text on national security, in order subtly to indicate how childish Obama's foreign policy is. Second, quote the first paragraph of the book—but do so incompletely. Here's the sentence that follows the passage Danzig quoted: "And then he feels that perhaps there isn't [another way]."

In other words: What Danzig is indicating, by his quotation, and his purposeful and suggestive omission of the very next sentence, is that there *isn't* another way than Bush's. Richard Danzig is said to be a leading candidate to be national security adviser if Obama should win. How selfless and patriotic of him to indicate to discerning listeners why Obama shouldn't become president!

—William Kristol

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Uncorking Energy Supplies

Tennessee's Bob Corker has quickly made himself the Senate's oil and gas expert.

BY FRED BARNES

GARY LOCKE

Bob Corker's introduction to the nation and to politicians in Washington was not auspicious. In his race against Democratic representative Harold Ford for an open Senate seat in Tennessee in 2006, the Republican National Committee aired a TV ad featuring a white woman who says she "met Harold at the Playboy party." In the ad's tag line, she adds, "Harold, call me," and winks at the camera. The ad drew enormous attention and, since Ford is African American, was attacked as racist. Corker urged the RNC to take the ad off the air. It was too late. He won narrowly, though the ad probably hurt his campaign more than it helped.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Today, after 18 months in the Senate, Corker has overcome the stain of being linked, if only involuntarily, to an infamous episode. By carefully following a set of rules that many senators ignore, he's become a serious player on Capitol Hill, someone who draws attention for his ideas on policy, especially on the biggest policy issue of the day, energy.

The rules, which require a touch of humility, are very simple: (1) concentrate on a few issues; (2) learn a lot about them; (3) don't overreach by trying to tackle too much of your chosen issues at once; and (4) don't blab about every other issue that comes up. Adhere to these rules and your moment of prominence should come. Corker's has, sooner rather than later.

Republican John Cornyn of Texas boils the rules down to a single sentence: "The best way to move up in the Senate is either to be here a long time or be an expert on something." Corker, 55, chose three issues to study: fiscal matters, health care, and energy. On each, he aimed "to know as much or more" as any Senate colleague.

Last winter, he proved to be a fiscal tightwad when he was one of 16 senators to vote against the economic stimulus package. "I find something extremely inappropriate about a deficit-ridden federal government borrowing money from our grandchildren and sprinkling it across the country for a short-term fix that will do little, if anything, to jump-start our troubled economy," he said.

Many senators know a lot about fiscal issues. Far fewer are knowledgeable about the nexus between energy policy and the heralded "cap and trade" system for reducing global warming. On this issue, Corker has become an expert, at least by Senate standards.

A year ago, he joined Democratic senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico on a trip to Europe to learn about how cap and trade had worked there. They talked to E.U. officials, carbon traders, and utility industry leaders. Corker's conclusion: Cap and trade is a failure. Carbon emissions in Europe had actually exceeded the cap.

Two months later, he spent two days in Greenland on a Senate excursion led by Democrat senator Barbara Boxer of California, viewing glaciers melting due to climate change. He was not overly alarmed, recalling that in any earlier climate cycle potatoes were grown in Greenland and that it had gotten its name for a reason.

While in Greenland, he met Dr. Minik Rosing, a Danish climate scientist. "Corker, here's the deal," the senator quoted the scientist as saying. Nothing should be done to curb global warming that might be harmful if the fears about climate turn out to be unfounded, Rosing said.

Corker was taken with this advice. His goal became a policy hat trick: to deal with global warming while achieving energy security and continued economic growth. "There are some rubs" among the three goals, he concedes.

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He argues that "our fossil fuels are a bridge to the future." Exploiting the oil and natural gas reserves offshore and underneath federal lands over the next several decades will provide time for alternative sources of energy to be developed—without harming the country in the meantime.

When the Senate debate on global warming legislation began in early June, Corker took a major role. At one point, he says, Democrat John Kerry approached him on the Senate floor and suggested a handful of senators work out an agreement. Corker was interested. But when he insisted increased oil and natural gas production would have to be part of any deal, Kerry balked, and the brief negotiations ended.

Corker focused his attention on cap and trade, not the broader issue of climate change or the science behind it. "Debating that today is counterproductive," he told me last week. On the cap and trade bill, he offered three amendments (which were never voted on as the bill died prematurely) and infuriated the legislation's chief proponent, Boxer, in the process.

One amendment required the billions from auctioning off carbon allowances to be rebated to taxpayers. Otherwise, the money would be handed out to special interests in "the mother of all earmarks," Corker said. Boxer took umbrage. "I resent the senator from Tennessee saying our bill is a slush fund," she said.

Another Corker amendment barred carbon allowances from being handed out "to entities that have nothing to do with reducing carbon emissions." His third amendment prohibited so-called "international offsets" as a way to comply with an American carbon cap.

Corker's mastery of cap and trade proved to be eye-catching. Lobbyists on all sides began to pay attention to his words. John Pemberton of the Southern Company, a utility, says it's clear Corker "knows how to dig into an issue and learn it."

In Washington, knowledge usually trumps opinion. "All of us have opinions," Corker says. "To be heard in the Senate and break through the clutter," it takes more than voicing an opinion. Senators who speak with authority, Corker says, are the ones who listen and learn, and are thoughtful and knowledgeable. "I'm not saying I'm in that category. But that's my goal." ♦

A Family-Friendly Idea for McCain

The solution is in the tax code.

BY RAMESH PONNURU

John McCain's June 3 speech in New Orleans was widely panned by his fellow Republicans, who criticized both his delivery and his timing, as it was a day dominated by Barack Obama's finally clinching the Democratic nomination. But some Republicans were heartened by the content of the speech, because McCain embraced the theme of reform that they believe is his only path to victory in November.

Yuval Levin made the argument well in an essay in these pages ("A Theme for McCain's Pudding," May 26). The "change" the public wants in politics, he observed, is for the government to respond to the swift and sometimes disconcerting alterations in American life. So, for example, we have a health care system shaped by rules enacted decades ago, when health care was cheaper (since it couldn't do much) and labor was less mobile than it is today. Levin's prescription is a set of conservative reforms to modernize the system to meet today's needs. McCain is temperamentally suited, as Levin also notes, to the role of the restless reformer.

Levin is, perhaps, too diplomatic to note two political advantages to the reform theme. The first is that a credible conservative reformism would distance McCain from Bush without alienating the president's remaining supporters. Instead of carefully picking areas of agreement and disagreement with the last seven years, McCain would be able to change the subject to tomorrow. The second is that an emphasis on modernization would undercut the ongoing Democratic campaign to depict McCain as old and out of touch. His proposed reforms would be the programmatic equivalent of the vigor he needs to project.

There is little to disagree with in this analysis, but there is a point to be made a bit more strongly: If McCain is to run as a conservative reformer, then serious tax reform is an issue he cannot duck. The tax code must rank high in any list of the dysfunctional institutions in American life. Yet tax reform would present McCain with a series of challenges.

The first is that he cannot simply repackage his existing tax-policy proposals as a reform. Those proposals are, in the main, worthwhile. Cutting the corporate tax rate to be more in line with the rates of other developed nations would promote growth. So would making the Bush tax cuts on dividends, capital gains, and estates permanent. Abolishing the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) would simplify the tax code. Doubling the dependent exemption would modestly reduce the antifamily bias of existing federal policies.

But that is a hodgepodge of nice ideas, not a coherent reform. It ties McCain too closely to Bush and the policy debates of the last eight years.

Ramesh Ponnuru is a senior editor at National Review.

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It does not offer enough to the lower middle class voters McCain needs. And it is unrealistic, given current budget projections.

The McCain campaign appears to recognize the inadequacy of its platform on taxes. McCain has said that he will outline a bigger reform at some point this year. From what he has said, it does not sound as though he is going to push for a flat tax or a national sales tax. That's a good thing: Either of these conservative hobbyhorses would raise taxes on a lot of lower middle class families.

A TAX TRAP

McCain's website says that he will propose a new, alternative tax system, adding, "When this reform is enacted, all who wish to stay under the current system could still do so, but everyone else could choose a vastly less complicated system with two tax rates and a generous standard deduction."

That makes it sound as though McCain is planning to go with some version of the tax-reform proposal that such conservative stalwarts as Rep. Paul Ryan, former presidential candidate Fred Thompson, and the Republican Study Committee have been promoting over the last year. That proposal has many good points. It brings the top tax rate way down to 25 percent (from the current 35).

But the combination of the low rates, the elimination of the AMT, and the introduction of a choice of tax codes for taxpayers would yield a big revenue hit for the government. To advocate it honestly, McCain would either have to abandon his concern about the deficit or specify many more budget cuts than he has so far. Worse, the alternative, reformed code achieves its low rates in part by scaling back the tax credit for children. The tax burden would be reduced, but families would be paying a larger share of it. Does McCain really want to campaign on a platform of shifting the tax burden from corporations to families?

AN ALTERNATIVE ALTERNATIVE

It may seem impossible for a tax reform to have all the qualities that McCain should be looking for: one that simplifies the code, levies only two tax rates, and encourages growth, but also provides significant tax relief to the lower middle class and avoids widening the deficit. But there is a way out.

A vastly expanded child tax credit, applicable against both income and payroll taxes, would reduce the tax burden quite a bit for lower middle class families. To promote growth, the reform could keep taxes on investment low while modestly reducing the top marginal tax rate. To take in as much money as the current tax code, meanwhile, this reformed, pro-family system would have to do two main things. First, it would eliminate or at least cap the deduction for state and local taxes. Second, its top rate, though lower than the current one, would apply to a lot more people.

The big winners from the Thompson/RSC proposal—the people for whom McCain would be taking significant political risks—would be affluent, childless households in high-tax states. The AMT, which has hit more and more of these households because it does not allow a deduction for state and local taxes, would be gone. Their tax rates would go down. And they don't take the child tax credit as it is. These same households would lose money under the pro-family reform. Their marginal tax rate would go down, but it would apply to a larger share of their income, and they would not be able to deduct as much of their state and local taxes.

In 1980, 1988, and 2000, Republicans won presidential elections in part by promising to tax a lot of middle-income voters significantly less than the Democrats would. If McCain wins this election without making such a promise, he will be the first Republican to do so in more than three decades. Or he can embrace a pro-family plan, and thereby go a long way to showing that he intends to reform our institutions to facilitate the pursuit of the American dream. ♦

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Darkness at the End of the Tunnel

Penetrating the Iranian underground.

By Gabriel Schoenfeld

Israel has just carried out a major aerial exercise, putting a hundred or so F-15s and F-16s into the skies over the eastern Mediterranean, evidently a rehearsal for a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. The move follows the statement earlier this month by Shaul Mofaz, Israel's deputy prime minister, that an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program is "unavoidable." Israel almost certainly knows the location of some of the critical nodes in the Iranian program that it must hit if it is to set the Iranian effort back by several years. It also possesses the technology to assure that its bombs will fall close to or on their targets. But would such a strike succeed?

We cannot know the answer, and neither can the Israelis. The question calls attention to what might be called the ongoing Counterrevolution in Military Affairs.

The Revolution in Military Affairs was based upon silicon, in particular the computer chips that make for precision-guided weapons. In the 1980s, the United States developed the technology to drop munitions near enough to their targets to ensure a high chance of destruction. In World War II, the circular error probable—the radius of a circle into which a projectile will land at least 50 percent of the time—was more than half a mile. Today, thanks to GPS systems and laser- and infrared-guiding devices, the radius is less than two dozen feet. Almost any given target can be knocked out by the use of just one or two conventional bombs.

Gabriel Schoenfeld is the senior editor of Commentary.

In the face of the threat of such efficient destruction, Iran has not stood still. Some of its countermeasures are themselves based upon computerized systems, including highly effective Russian-made surface-to-air missiles that Iran is set to take delivery of this fall. But Iran is also employing a far older means of warfare: deep burrowing.

B-2A Spirit bomber, deliverer of bunker busters

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE / U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY GARY ELL

Subterranean combat is familiar to all students of military affairs. During the Civil War, soldiers with coal mining experience dug a 511-foot-long tunnel some 50 feet beneath the Confederate lines at Petersburg, Virginia. The terminus was filled with 8,000 pounds of gunpowder, and the blast killed between 250 and 350 Confederate soldiers. (The operation ended in disaster, however, when the Union troops who had rushed into the crater to follow up the attack were slaughtered by Confederate troops firing downward from the rim in what was described as a "turkey shoot.")

More typical, though, is defensive digging. In Berlin, beneath an otherwise unremarkable Chinese restaurant, are the ruins of the most notorious underground facility in history: the Führer bunker. Adolf Hitler held court here in the last phase of World War II, and it was in the bunker that, on April 30, 1945, together with his new bride, he ingested cyanide. As an engineering feat, the Führer bunker was not particularly impressive; Hitler's honeymoon grave was a mere 28 feet underground.

At the dawn of the nuclear age, the USSR constructed a vast network of tunnels under Moscow, including a 17-mile secret subway line to Vnukovo airport, to ensure that the leaders of the Kremlin would survive a nuclear strike. Some of these underground facilities were hundreds of yards deep and could accommodate thousands of people, sustaining them in compartments impervious to chemical and biological attack. It required a totalitarian system to marshal the manpower and resources to remove such an immense quantity of soil and rock.

Today, however, tunneling is far cheaper and easier. In the early 1990s, the Chunnel, the 30-mile rail tunnel connecting France and England, was built using drilling machines that hewed out a 30-foot diameter circle of rock at the remarkable pace of 164 feet a day. Modern drills are huge, multi-million-dollar pieces of machinery. They operate with a circular disk on the front end that holds steel teeth, which cut into the rock as the plate rotates. A conveyor system pulls the spoil backward, while workers follow up, erecting a reinforced lining for the excavated structure. Narrower diameter tunnels than the Chunnel can be carved into solid rock at the staggering rate of 650 feet per day.

The military significance of all this cannot be overemphasized: Ultra-deep shelters for critical military facilities can be made formidably resistant to attack. It is exceedingly difficult to discern from the surface where tunnel ventilation shafts are located or in which direction a tunnel proceeds. One has only to consider the trouble Israel has had finding tunnels dug by Hamas

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out of the Gaza Strip that are just a couple of yards below the surface. Another difficulty is determining exactly what military activities are being conducted in any given tunnel.

What is more, if tunnels are dug to a sufficient depth in the right kind of rock—a thousand or more feet into the earth—they are extraordinarily difficult to breach. Even a medium-yield nuclear weapon detonated above ground may not be powerful enough to do the job. Reportedly acting with help from North Korea (and as Emanuele Ottolenghi notes in the July-August *Commentary*, employing imported European machinery), Iran has built dozens of underground bunkers to house its missile and nuclear programs.

The United States (and presumably Israel) is urgently developing ways to neutralize such targets. Concepts range the gamut from munitions that deliver a powerful shock into the adjoining bedrock to nonlethal methods for introducing a foul odor into the underground chambers, rendering human habitation unbearable.

The problems posed by tunneling seldom come in for public discussion. This happened most recently in 2005 when Congress shelved a Bush administration plan merely to study development of something called the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), amid talk it would ignite an arms race. RNEP was a weapon that would have served as a deterrent to any regime thinking it c`ould buy invulnerability by digging deep. Its defeat was ironic because only a few years earlier, without a peep from Congress, the Clinton administration pushed through the innocuously named B61-11 bomb, which had strikingly similar characteristics, though it tends to break apart when boring into certain types of geological formations in which a hardened target might be located.

Whatever the fate of the RNEP, nuclear weapons were never the best answer to the tunneling problem given the prohibitive political costs of ever employing them. More practical would be the Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a 30,000-pound package under development jointly by Boeing and Northrop Grumman that is the largest conventional bomb ever built. Precision guided like everything else these days, it would be the ideal weapon to rattle—and perhaps pulverize—a target like Iran's underground uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz.

In one of his recent outbursts, Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called Israel a "stinking corpse," destined to disappear. Such outrageous language coming—not for the first time—from the head of a state seeking nuclear weapons, has made the Iranian nuclear program all the more ominous. The day is clearly growing closer when the West is going to either face the challenge or, if it permits the ayatollahs to acquire nuclear weapons, suffer a strategic setback with a range of predictable and unpredictable consequences. The Massive Ordnance Penetrator, still in the testing phase, cannot be fitted to the bays of American bombers a day too soon. ♦

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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Mad Cows and Angry Koreans

They've got a beef with their new president.

BY PETER M. BECK

KYODO

Protesting American beef in Seoul

Over a million South Koreans poured into the streets in recent weeks to protest the return of American beef to the Korean dinner table. Fears of Mad-Cow Disease have sparked the largest demonstrations since Korea democratized two decades ago. Given that not a single American has contracted the disease since a handful of cases were discovered in cows in 2003, the protests appear to be a massive overreaction. But then the causes of the demonstrations run much deeper than just food safety concerns.

The protests began soon after Seoul's pro-American new president, Lee Myung-bak, pledged to fully open the Korean beef market on the eve of his first meeting with President Bush in April. Lee was trying to rejuvenate an alliance that had faltered in recent years and remove the chief roadblock to a free trade agreement with the United States. Lee returned from a warm meeting with Bush at Camp David to see his popularity plummet in the face of accusations that he had ignored public sentiment and been too generous with Washington. A popular investigative television show questioning the safety of American beef and making the sensationalist claim the Koreans are genetically more susceptible to the disease added to the firestorm of criticism, especially among university students.

Thus, was a protest movement born. Students were once the conscience of Korea, but they relinquished that role in the 1990s as democracy took hold and society rejected their violent methods. At today's student rallies, though, peace candles are the preferred weapon, rather than the Molotov cocktails that I dodged as a foreign student in Korea in the 1980s. The students came out in early June not so much to rebel against the government but to express their exasperation with Korea's hypercompetitive education system. Having witnessed countless demonstrations during my years in Korea, I did not take them very seriously at first. I suspect the president made this critical mistake as well.

Lee is widely perceived as arrogant and out of touch, which, coupled with growing anxieties about the economy (especially skyrocketing fuel prices), gradually drew office workers and parents with strollers into the streets for the first time in a generation. The protests reached a crescendo on June 10 when hundreds of thousands (the precise number is still in dispute) peacefully protested in Seoul. Though the ostensible focus is U.S. beef, anti-Americanism has been notably absent. Equally surprising, the demonstrations have not become a vehicle for the liberal opposition parties—routed in National Assembly elections just two months ago—to take the political process to the streets. Protestors have repeatedly told opposition muckrakers to "go back to the National Assembly." Indeed, the protests have lacked a public face. Even the umbrella group stoking the demonstrations was hastily formed after they began.

Since becoming president in Feb-

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ruary, Lee has been painfully slow in carrying out the ritualistic cleansing of his cabinet and secretariat—up to two dozen heads could finally roll in the coming days. This is unlikely, however, to boost his rock-bottom popularity, which threatens to turn him into a lame duck with four years and nine months to serve. He needs to discard the top-down management skills he honed as the CEO of Hyundai Construction and find a way to connect with voters.

While this is largely a domestically driven crisis and little anger has been directed against the United States, the Bush administration has appeared deaf to Seoul's pleas for help. Two Korean delegations have visited Washington so far, and both have experienced intense resistance to modifying the beef deal. The Lee administration has replaced its calls for "renegotiating" the free trade agreement with requests for "additional negotiations," but Washington has been reluctant to give any ground for fear of undermining other trade negotiations. The largest U.S. beef producers have promised to send only beef made from cows less than 30 months old, which is thought to be safer than that of older cows, but it is unclear if this will be enough to assuage Korean concerns.

The stakes could not be higher for finding a mutually agreeable solution. South Korea was America's third leading market for beef, worth over $800 million in sales, when the ban on American beef went into effect five years ago. More important, Seoul is one of America's leading economic partners, with over $70 billion in trade expected this year. On the security front, South Korea is one of a handful of countries that have sent troops to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Delaying implementation of the accord or keeping the most problematic types of beef off Korean shelves would cost little, and greatly improve America's image. Lee's mistakes present an opportunity for the Bush administration to show President Lee and the Korean public that America is a friend indeed. ♦

Obamanomics

How McCain can fight back—if he cares to.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Every day that passes makes one thing clearer and clearer: Barack Obama knows precisely what he wants to do to the U.S. economy, and John McCain is intent on proving his self-confessed lack of knowledge with a charming set of homilies.

Start with Obama's proposal to raise taxes on all families earning more than $250,000 per year in order to finance a $1,000 tax cut for "middle-income" tax payers. Assuming that there is enough money to be had from taxpayers in that higher-income class to fund the cut for the much larger number of middle-income earners—a heroic assumption—McCain's charge that Obama is planning a massive tax increase doesn't apply to this overt redistribution of the tax burden. Taking from Peter and giving to Paul is not an increase in the taking.

Nor can this rejiggering of the tax burden be dismissed out of hand. The transfer of income from one taxpayer to another does not reduce total welfare. Indeed, the Obama proposal arguably increases welfare or, to use the vaguer but more voguish term, "happiness." Economists, and this includes those working for McCain, know that the value ("marginal utility") of a $1,000 increase in income for someone earning $60,000 per year exceeds the loss in value, even of a greater sum, to someone earning $250,000 and more. So Obama can rightly claim that this one of his several tax proposals does not involve a tax increase, and makes a lot of people much better off at the expense of making a few people only slightly worse off. Not bad policy.

Or is it? McCain's people will undoubtedly work the numbers to see if one can indeed take a chunk from a few Peters and get enough to add a consequential amount to lots of poorer Pauls. But even if the numbers don't support the feasibility of the Obama redistribution, I suspect that point will get lost in the welter of statistical claim and counterclaim. The take-away, as the pros in Washington call it, will be: Obama wants to tax those who have appropriated most of the benefits of the recent prosperity and share those benefits more fairly with those who have been left behind.

No, if McCain is to have an answer it must be based on a demolition of the basic Obama thesis that he can make many people better off by making a few worse off, and a demonstration that the Obama program satisfies neither the criterion of economic efficiency nor the (more potent) public notion of what is fair. It will be necessary for McCain to show that the recipients of Obama's $1,000 gift will not be better off, and might indeed be worse off after the income transfer is completed. How could this be?

Taxes change behavior. By raising rates on upper income payers, Obama is reducing their incentive to work and take risks. The income tax increase is not all that he has in mind for them. He plans to increase their payroll taxes, the taxes they pay on dividends received and capital gains earned, and on any transfers they might have in mind to their kith and kin when they shuffle off this mortal coil. If the aggregate of these additional taxes substantially diminishes

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incentives to set up a small business of the sort that has created most of the new jobs in recent decades, the $1,000 tax rebate will be more than offset by the consequences of reduced growth and new business formation.

There are two problems with this counterpunch. The first is that we have no idea whether it is true. The McCain campaign has shown little taste for doing the sort of empirical work on which the Obama team thrives. The second is that this is just the sort of exercise that McCain finds unappealing. At best, he will leave such matters to "surrogates." Alas, the precise mechanics by which they will answer questions directed at their candidate during the town hall meetings he is proposing have not been worked out.

Perhaps, then, there is some sort of income redistribution with which McCain can be comfortable, the sort that increases faith in the fairness of the market capitalist system of which he is justifiably so fond, and which has produced greater prosperity for more people than any other economic system.

Surely the populist streak in the Arizona Republican leads him to find something wrong—yes, wrong—with the way executive compensation has become divorced from executive performance. And surely he would be comfortable calling for greater shareholder participation in the approval of executive compensation, and supporting the SEC's recent efforts to require corporations to report just how they plan to relate executive compensation to performance.

Surely, too, McCain knows that paying mortgage brokers based on the quantity of business they generate creates incentives to imprudent lending. These are not the much-derided speculators, who actually take large risks with their own money, and who are the favorite target of politicians-on-the-make: These are people who have found a structural flaw in a market, and exploited it while imposing the costs of their activities on society. There's a principle here that would permit McCain to favor regulation—regulation that makes mortgage markets work better.

Then there is energy policy. It should be possible on the straight-talk express to devise some alternative to the patently cynical promise of "energy independence." No such "independence" is within reach, as the successive failures of Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and two Bushes to attain it should demonstrate. Leave that pandering to Obama, who would somehow achieve that goal while at the same time foreclosing drilling offshore and in Alaska, and killing the nuclear option by opposing the opening of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, without which nuclear plant construction will be minimal.

Surely the populist streak in the Arizona Republican leads him to find something wrong—yes, wrong—with the way executive compensation has become divorced from executive performance.

McCain, meanwhile, need not feel stuck with his own oft-stated opposition to drilling in Alaska. First, he might point out that a policy appropriate when gasoline was selling for $2 a gallon is not appropriate when it is headed towards $5. Second, since the governor of Alaska has announced that she is eager for exploration to begin in ANWR, McCain can in good conscience apply to Alaska the position he has long taken in regard to offshore drilling in Florida and other states—that the decision should be left to those states. Finally, he might point out that now that we know we are in a long war with radical Islam, it is more than ever incumbent on us to make painful tradeoffs. One such is bearing any environmental consequences of drilling in ANWR, consequences he can continue to regret, in order to achieve the more important goal of depriving Middle East funders of jihadists at least some of the billions now flowing to them by substituting domestic oil for imports.

The art of governing is the art of making just such tough decisions. The political risk of being accused of flip-flopping seems minimal. The voters are ahead of the politicians on this issue, and now lean towards making the most of our domestic resources. Besides, moving energy policy from the realm of economic policy into the realm of national security can only be to McCain's advantage. He would certainly have a more coherent policy position if he argued that it is important to keep money out of the hands of bad guys, than if he continued attacking oil companies for what he calls "obscene profits." After all, polls show that the voters know that it is OPEC, rising demand in China, and the refusal of producer countries to allow our companies to develop their resources—not big, bad oil companies—that are responsible for high oil prices.

McCain might go further, and build on his reputation for opposing earmarks and the worst machinations of the K Street crowd, by abandoning the cap-and-trade system he has been supporting, in part at the urging of his buddy, Joe Lieberman (the man who could have rid the nation of the scourge of Majority Leader Harry Reid, Chairman Patrick Leahy, and the like by voting with the Republicans to organize the Senate). McCain can part with Lieberman by pointing out that what seemed sound theory has turned out in practice to represent everything he opposes. The recent abortive trial run of the cap-and-trade system in Congress showed that it would be a lobbyists' bonanza, as some interest groups scramble for permits to pollute, and other interest groups insert their snouts into the multi-billion-dollar trough that would be

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made available to fund technologies of Friends of Nancy and Harry and assorted bureaucrats.

Finally, and this would require a leap of political courage, McCain should spend ten minutes with his adviser Douglas Holtz-Eakin, who I would guess is still recovering from his embarrassment at McCain's call for a cut in gasoline taxes, to discuss the opposite: a tax on oil products, especially gasoline and heating oil. This doesn't mean abandoning his opposition to higher taxes. Indeed, the point is not to raise federal revenues. Every dollar that comes in should be rebated, perhaps by reducing the payroll taxes of everyone earning less than, say, $50,000 per year, the group Obama intends to benefit by raising taxes on those energetic small-business owners. The beneficiaries of the McCain shift in taxes from work to polluting, imported gasoline would see the reduction in taxes immediately—when they received their first salary check after the new regime was in place. But the main point is this: The money that the Saudis and other supporters of jihadists would otherwise get would be reducing the taxes of hard-pressed Middle America. Take that, Barack Obama. It's called straight talk.

My best guess is that none of this will come to pass. McCain has little interest in economic policy, and prefers the sort of intuitive, ad hoc reaction that unfortunately led him to support the continued closure of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and more sensibly to rail against multi-million payoffs to executives who had almost brought their companies to ruin. His economic policies have been aptly described as the politics of personal honor, which is a nice way of saying incoherent. They will therefore likely continue to be a combination of the good, the bad, and the ugly. If he ends up a winner in the debates as often as Clint Eastwood did in his flicks, McCain's strategy will be vindicated. If not, we are in for an expansion of the role of government in economic life that will make Lyndon Johnson look like laissez-faire. ♦

'Brideshead Revisited' Revisited

A cinematic bastardization six decades in the making.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

If you were forced to name the high-water mark of television, the 1981 Granada production of *Brideshead Revisited* would be a fine choice. Starring Jeremy Irons, Anthony Andrews, Claire Bloom, John Gielgud, and Laurence Olivier, *Brideshead* ran a luxurious 659 minutes, gliding smoothly along the rails laid by writer John Mortimer, who preserved the gorgeous textures of Evelyn Waugh's dialogue and his intricate story of love and faith. Mortimer's adaptation of Waugh's novel is one of the towering achievements of modern screenwriting. Twenty-seven years on, the series still inspires a cultish devotion.

Not content to leave well enough alone, Miramax will release a new theatrical version of *Brideshead* this August. The trailer for the film surfaced a few weeks ago (www.apple.com/trailers/miramax/bridesheadrevisited/) and it promises a new and improved *Brideshead*.

The Miramax logo is followed by the type of itchy violins that mark the Jason Bourne movies. The audience is shown an aerial shot of Castle Howard—the same residence in which the first *Brideshead* was filmed—and then brief scenes of Charles and Sebastian frolicking. Emma Thompson is revealed in the role of Lady Marchmain and then a series of title cards are shown as the music darkens to convey the mood of a thriller. "She welcomed him into her home," one card says. "Into a world of privilege." "Into a life he never imagined."

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What follows is a series of vignettes featuring the characters of Waugh's *Brideshead* but in situations that are utterly unrecognizable. Charles Ryder seems to be a striving scholarship-boy, dazzled by the Marchmain fortune and determined to grab some piece of it for himself. When Lady Marchmain asks him what he wants in life, he replies, "I want to look back and say that I didn't turn my back. That I was happy." (A sentiment no British gentleman of that era would dare express even on the off chance he actually thought that way.)

We see Julia tagging along with Charles and Sebastian on their visit to Venice. This seems a small deviation until Lord Marchmain (played by the great Michael Gambon) places his arms around both Sebastian and Julia and creepily remarks to Charles, "What a lot of *temptation*," as if he were offering up his two children as playthings.

This notion of a love triangle among Charles, Sebastian, and Julia is a prominent feature, at least of the trailer. Sebastian cries out to Charles, "You don't care about me, all you ever wanted was my sister." The idea of homosexuality between Charles and Sebastian isn't new, of course. Waugh consciously alluded to it—without ever describing it—and the television series did the same. Anthony Andrews in the role of Sebastian was a stunningly beautiful boy—confident, eccentric, and gay. The new *Brideshead* stars Ben Whishaw as a wilted, fey, almost queeny, Sebastian.

But just as the trailer leaves Venice, the background music changes

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to synthesizers and angry drums as the plot of the new *Brideshead* is explained. More title cards tell us that it's the story of

> One man's desire.
> One man's ambition.
> One man's passion.
> One woman's control.
> One woman's decision.

And finally, *"One woman's power."* Yes, the new *Brideshead* features a villain—Lady Marchmain. Instead of a pious, if clumsy, near-saint, Lady Marchmain is now ambitious and manipulative. "I hope you didn't let Julia mislead you," she sternly warns Charles. "Her future is not a question of choice." The future she seems to be alluding to is a marriage of power and wealth to a man of consequence. A moment later, we see Lady Marchmain at a large gala where she announces, "It gives me great pleasure to announce the engagement of my eldest daughter, Lady Julia Flyte, to Mister Rex Mottram." Waugh's Lady Marchmain never has plans for Julia's future—the Marchmains' situation is above either financial or social improvement. And when Julia becomes engaged to the decidedly non-Catholic Rex, Lady Marchmain is given the very opposite of pleasure.

Emma Thompson as Lady Marchmain

NICOLA DOVE / MIRAMAX FILMS

The bizarre reimagining of Lady Marchmain seems to be a result of the excision of Catholicism from the new *Brideshead*. The screenplay reportedly stays away from matters of the church and the trailer makes but one allusion to it, showing a rosary falling from someone's hand. And, if there is none of that fussy Catholic stuff in the new *Brideshead* story, then the pious Lady Marchmain might reasonably be seen as a heel. As her younger daughter Cordelia observes in the novel, "When people wanted to hate God, they hated Mummy." Take away God, and Lady Marchmain may be little more than a controlling shrew.

The rest of the movie's marketing is of a piece with the trailer. The squib on the theatrical poster declares, "Privilege. Ambition. Desire. At Brideshead everything comes at a price." Another slogan claims that "Love is not ours to control." The entire affair comes across more like a prequel to *Cruel Intentions* than an adaptation of Waugh's masterpiece.

The new *Brideshead* is an outrage. But it's also an utterly predictable degradation. The first time Hollywood circled *Brideshead* was in 1947. Waugh journeyed to Los Angeles to meet with MGM, which offered him $140,000 for the rights. He was keen—very keen—for the money, but insisted on retaining a veto over the script treatment. As Douglas Patey notes in his excellent *Life of Evelyn Waugh*,

> Predictably, given the novel's publicity—its American dust-jacket advertised "an extraordinary love story" set among "the rich, the beautiful, and the damned Marchmains"—it soon became clear that MGM viewed "*Brideshead* purely as a love story" [worried Waugh]. "None of them see the theological implications."

Talks fell apart and the movie was never made.

Waugh subsequently wrote two essays for the *Daily Telegraph* titled "Why Hollywood Is a Term of Disparagement" and "What Hollywood Touches it Banalizes" in which he listed a long bill of complaints about the American movie-making industry, including the memorable quip that Hollywood is "[a] community whose morals are those of caged monkeys." Struck by Hollywood's aversion to the centrality of Catholicism in *Brideshead*, he later wrote,

> in my future books there will be two things to make them unpopular: a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me, means only one thing, man in his relation to God.

So why the new godless *Brideshead* now? The film has long been percolating. At a 2003 conference at Georgetown, Teresa Waugh D'Arms, the executrix of the Waugh estate, was asked why she had signed off on a film, which even at that early stage of development looked like an abomination. In a response worthy of her father she replied, "For the money, of course." ♦

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A resident of Big Ugly, West Virginia

GARY GLADSTONE / CORBIS

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When Bubba Meets Obama

If you want to fish for votes in Appalachia, here's how

By Matt Labash

Roanoke

To get the truth out of a political gun-for-hire, it is always best to catch him when he's unemployed. When not obliged to peddle the platitudes and fictions of the poll-tested mediocrities to whom such a one is often yoked, he may revert to speaking English straight. Not that Dave "Mudcat" Saunders, most recently of John Edwards's abortive presidential run, has ever let employability get in the way of blasting the truth, or his peculiar version of it, from a sawed-off double barrel.

In addition to his first and highest calling—as a lethal hunter whose ideal day involves sitting still as a sniper up a tree in a deer stand in the Blue Ridge mountains—Mudcat is a Democratic rural strategist, in a year when the Democratic nominee badly needs a rural strategy. The rumbling, foul-mouthed Jeremiah Johnson of the campaign trail, Bard of the Bubbasphere, Mudcat has worked his voodoo, with varying results, for everyone from former governor Mark Warner of Virginia (win), to failed presidential candidates Edwards and Bob Graham, to Virginia senator and vice-presidential prospect Jim Webb (who won, with the help of liberal turnout in Northern Virginia and George Allen's "Macaca" implosion).

Mudcat is no technocrat, describing himself as "more Bagger Vance than Karl Rove," occasionally telling his candidate to go to a five-iron, while mostly providing "spiritual uplift." He'll do anything for his guy, from slapping his face on a stock car, to choreographing back-country barnstorming tours that sop up bubba attention with the likes of his pal Ben "Cooter" Jones (formerly of Congress and *The Dukes of Hazzard*), to providing security by bringing his own gun to campaign events. But no matter who's filing his W-2s, he tends to go his own way.

Working for Edwards last year, Mudcat took it upon himself, when dealing with a skeptical *Boston Globe* reporter, to rename Edwards's "Economic Fairness for the North Country" tour the "Let's Help John Edwards Screw Those Who Screwed Us" tour (the screwers, in this case, being the NAFTA-loving Clintons). Two years ago, in a panel discussion at the Daily Kos convention, Mudcat nearly set the drapes on fire in front of a roomful of netroots nerds when debating Thomas Schaller, author of *Whistling Past Dixie*. Schaller holds that Democrats should write off the South as unwinnable because of the forces of race and religion. His thesis prompted Mudcat to extend a standing social invitation: "Kiss my Rebel ass!"

A few years back, he joined forces with the Commonwealth Coalition, a group trying to torpedo an anti-gay marriage amendment in his native Virginia. Mudcat, who loves the ladies almost as much as he loves killing big bucks, agreed to take the gig only if he could persuade the bubbas in language they could relate to. He thundered to the *Roanoke Times*: "I'm pretty sure I ain't a queer. And I've never had queer thoughts, but I do have several queer buddies who called me and asked me to

'Democrats are perceived as anti-gun. And so with a slogan like "Close the gun show loophole," what are the first four words of that? "Close the gun show." Bubba doesn't mind an instant check, but closing the gun show is all he can hear. He doesn't need to hear "loophole," after he's heard the first four words.'
—Dave 'Mudcat' Saunders

Matt Labash is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

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help. I think it's blasphemy to put this on the ballot and try to divide God's children for political gain. God loves them queers every bit that he loves the Republicans."

It's not a shtick that travels well, to be sure. And Mudcat has plenty of detractors, sometimes on his own side, calling him "Mudflap" and worse. But the brainy, bewitching actress Madeleine Stowe (*Last of the Mohicans*, *We Were Soldiers*) isn't one of them. Having spent plenty of time campaigning for Edwards, she became fast friends with Mudcat on the trail.

While her circle in Los Angeles, for whom she occasionally plays his voicemails, has told her he sounds "you know . . . not smart," Stowe shakes her head "over the predictability of it all," which she regards as "the problem Obama has in a nutshell. It's not elitism being practiced in L.A. It's just plain old ignorance—fear of what's different. And these same people talk bitterly of racism."

When she first saw Mudcat on MSNBC, Stowe was suspicious. "I remember thinking he must be some deep southern friend of the family. . . . He reeked of Big Daddy from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. He's an archetype. . . . He's left-handed in his thinking, which is always interesting. . . . He's psychologically cunning. Rather than trying to make so many problems pretty by putting a nice spin on things, he's able to hit you on a visceral level which also feels really, really truthful."

As we agree on the musicality of Mudcat's delivery, Stowe says, "There's also something epic-like in his thinking—which is a quality any great song has, and all epics are born from something simple. He'll take the smallest detail and spin a huge story out of it. That's kind of his gift. He understands how a person will react on the gut level to just about any idea, probably because he's so reactive himself."

The last couple of months have seen two storylines emerge in the Democratic party. The first is that Barack Obama put away the nomination. The second is that Obama has a white-people problem in the general. More specifically, he has a problem with white rural voters, particularly those of the Appalachian belt, which straddles key states like Pennsylvania and Ohio. To put it in Mudcat-speak, Obama got beat there in the primaries like a tied-up billy goat.

Ruggedly independent, anti-elitist, and famously pugnacious, the denizens of Appalachia include many of the Scots-Irish variety lionized in Jim Webb's last book, *Born Fighting*, touched upon in his current book, *A Time to Fight*, and whose fight song is bound to be reprised in a future book, *What Are You Looking At? I'll Fight You*.

These voters went in droves to the unlikeliest Jacksonian populist imaginable, Hillary Clinton, whose bubba street cred entailed calling the hogs at Arkansas Razorbacks football games, claiming she once bagged a banded duck, and doing a shot of Crown Royal at a campaign stop (three tries to get it down, and it was Canadian whiskey to boot). If Obama was spanked by a poseur like her in these regions, journalistic handicappers say, imagine how bad he'll have it against a war hero with the Scots-Irish name "McCain."

Summoned by the likes of Senate majority leader Harry Reid to tell the Democratic caucus what they need to do to bring rural Reagan-Democrat types back into the fold, Mudcat takes on the permanent class of campaign professionals and their 'thread the needle strategy' of trusting liberal urban bulwarks and fickle new young voters to win elections.

These are the people Mudcat knows best. So when my editor commanded me to get down to the Roanoke Valley of southwest Virginia, where he lives, to find out what Mudcat's prescription was for Obama to stanch the bleeding, it seemed like an ideal opportunity to kill two birds. Mudcat had been imploring me for months to grab my fly rod and catch some trout with him.

When I contacted Mudcat, he was in a state of blood-spitting agitation at all the Poindexter reporters trafficking in stereotypes, depicting mountain people as racist mouth-breathers, while explaining Obama's "Appalachian problem" as if they were anthropologists dropping in on the lip-plated savages of America's last exotic tribe. He agreed to host me, insisting I stay at his house instead of a hotel. "Be sure to bring your gun and plenty of ammo," he wrote me in an email, playing to Poindexter type:

> The state put up a new road sign a few days ago out here in front of my house, and I've been saving it until you get here. They're having a revival over at the church so we'll be having supper on the grounds tomorrow evening. The service shouldn't last too long because Orville got drunk the night before last, rolled up his windows, locked his truck, and forgot to pull the snakes out of the cab. By the time he came to at 4:00 yesterday afternoon, they were cooked. The Klan meets right after church so we can all walk over together. The Grand Dragon has scaled the weekly program back a bit. We were planning on burning seven crosses tomorrow night, but with gasoline prices being where they are, we can only afford to burn two. I know how much you like to fish. I'll take you to a hole over behind Cousin Gertie's trailer, but you must fish alone for awhile as I have not seen Cousin

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Gertie for several months and need to get "caught up." You can stay in the spare bedroom, at least until she warms up to you a little bit. We probably won't be able to sleep much anyway because nobody can cook up a mess of Crystal Meth like Cousin Gertie. The next day we'll fish the fast water where the big-city Yankees ride them rafts. There's only one thing an Appalachian boy likes to do more in the summer than fish, and that's to catch a Ned Beatty look-alike as he leisurely makes his way down the river with no idea he's floating livestock. We thought we had us some Yankees last week, but when we sneaked up on them, it was just the Crowell boys dumping an old refrigerator and washing machine in the river. I can't stress strongly enough to bring extra ammunition. Your friend, Mudcat

I hadn't seen Mudcat in his natural habitat since I profiled him for this magazine three years ago. His proud mug adorned our cover with the headline "Hunting Bubba," as he held up the head of a freshly killed 12-point buck in the back of his truckbed. It was a memorable trip. The reformed alcoholic fed me moonshine out of his freezer, gave me turkey beards to take home to my kids, and nearly killed us on a white-knuckle spin in his SUV on an outlaw track (all four of his tires ended up needing to be replaced).

Since the original story, Mudcat and I have become friends. I've watched the silver-tongued 59-year-old nearly pick up half a college women's volleyball team at a cab stand in Vegas. I've heard him croak out bluegrass tunes at a jam session in the Nashville living room of banjo player Rob McCoury, of the legendary Del McCoury Band. I am a regular recipient of phone calls that start with the greeting, "Listen to this, Brotha," as he's already spinning a tune, like Dr. Ralph Stanley's "Angel Band," a version of which he recorded for Mudcat's dying mother, Miss Aggie. And I have served as sounding board for Mudcat's upcoming book, a spiritual treatise that will be so "reverent to The Power" that it will have next to no rude words after those in the title, *The Half-Assed Christian's Guide to Living*.

Still, Mudcat and I had all but stopped talking politics in the interest of maintaining civility, on account of his last campaign. Working tirelessly for John Edwards, Mudcat seemed convinced that the senator was on a par with Jesus Christ (with the slight edge going to Edwards, since Christ only had the Beatitudes, not a 12-point Rural Recovery Plan), whereas I could never shake the impression Edwards was selling me a used car, and not a very good one—maybe a Ford Festiva with the odometer rolled back.

But with Edwards long gone—and the rural vote coming into sharp relief, as Hillary picked up the slack—we'd reopened a constructive dialogue. While still insisting that Edwards would've matched up better against McCain than anyone, Mudcat admits Edwards was always a "dead man walking," who didn't have a shot in a three-way primary against "two historical bookends."

Mudcat lives in a converted migrant-worker's shack at the foot of Bent Mountain with burbling Back Creek running through his front yard. I unload my gear into his seven-year-old daughter Abby's room (she lives with her mother, nearby). The house is all mounted antlers and furry pelts and other things that would send Ingrid Newkirk straight to her therapist. Even his daughter's room, apart from the pink "Princess" chair and Mickey Mouse statuary, is a reminder of animal holocaust, with an *American Hunter* magazine on the nightstand. (A friend Abby brought home, marveling at all the mounted buckheads, once asked Abby if her daddy had killed all those. The response: "Yes, all except that. I killed that one.")

Mudcat jokes with senators Harry Reid, left, and Dick Durban, right.

BOB BROWN / RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Over the several days I stay with him, I settle into Mudcat time. A former sportswriter who has made a considerable amount of money in real estate development (politics has been a late-life hobbyhorse), Mudcat keeps the hours of a retiree, though he says, "It's hard to retire if you've never had a job." He awakens mid-to-late morning, flips on a recorded women's fast-pitch softball game (he will fight you if you disparage his beloved Hokies of Virginia Tech), and

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sits at his living room table in his Hula-girl boxers and a *Colbert Report* hat. Here, he consumes his breakfast of champions: a string of unfiltered Camels and a couple of Red Bulls, which give him the stamina he needs to hold forth on politics half the day, then fish until dark.

The living-room symposia are not conducted in the dulcet tones of a public-radio broadcast. They are nicotine-laced and profanity-spiked. Mudcat swears like he's being paid by the four-letter word. "I feel s—y about it," he says. But as he once told a woman who stood up after a speech he gave to a Democratic audience to say he made compelling points, but they'd be more effective without the swearing, "Lady, there's nothing I can do about it. Because if you'd seen what I've seen from elitist Democrats, you'd swear too."

Squirrel hunting in West Virginia

He's speaking of the breed of mostly Northeastern elitist liberal that he encounters even on his own campaigns: condescending, green around the gills from consuming too much arugula, with overdeveloped thumbs from clacking nonstop on their Blackberries, all of whom jealously guard their titles such as "deputy campaign manager of the coffee pot." He calls them "the Harvards" (a term pinched from LBJ), though in fairness he stipulates that "there's a lot of jerks that went to other places too."

While Mudcat gets summoned by the likes of Senate majority leader Harry Reid to tell the Democratic caucus what they need to do to bring rural Reagan-Democrat types back into the fold, he says it's an eternal struggle on the ground, among the permanent class of campaign professionals. They're addicted to their "thread the needle strategy" of depending on liberal urban bulwarks and enough fickle new young voters' being registered to win elections.

That strategy has helped Dems drop the last two presidentials, and could've lost them more if Bill Clinton hadn't been in three-way races. And many more elections stand to be dropped, Mudcat says. Some estimates say the South, for instance, which some Democrats wish to write off altogether, will be home to 40 percent of the electorate within the next few cycles. What kind of blinkered pinhead would want to spot Republicans 40 percent of the electorate?

Mudcat, who describes himself as "an old-timey Democrat: pro-gun, pro-God, pro fiscal conservatism," is tired of teaching remedial Mudcat Math to deaf ears in his own party. It can be distilled as The Twofer Strategy: If you get a rural white voter who otherwise would have voted for McCain to switch to Obama, his vote is worth twice as much as a vote from your standard "liberal pinko commie" or your MTV Rock-the-Voter, since Obama not only accrues one vote for himself, but also takes one away from McCain. Campaigns that court the base while ignoring voters who could be won over are "hunting squirrels they've already killed."

Mudcat is not, therefore, a defensive tactician. As a student of history and uphill fights (he's perhaps the only Democratic consultant alive who sleeps under a Confederate flag bedspread, though he'd never fly the Stars'n'Bars outside, as he's merely celebrating "the benign parts of my culture" and wouldn't want to "disrupt my black friends' peace of mind"), he cites Stonewall Jackson, who

> believed in taking it to the enemy at their strengths. Jackson wanted to go over the river after Manassas, and Joseph Johnston, then commander of Confederate forces, wouldn't let him. Jackson believed in moving armies and moving them quick. He fought in the Upper Shenandoah Valley, marched 60 miles, and won a battle at Fredericksburg the third day. I believe in quick movement, and surprise. If you get your opponent on defense, he burns up his ammunition holding his own ground. And if you're holding in politics, you're not driving votes your way. You're just holding the ones you got. You gotta put 'em on defense, and keep 'em there.

Mudcat doesn't detect much appetite for offense among Democrats (though he lauds DNC chair Howard Dean's "50 State Strategy"). There's a defeatist attitude among his party's elites about getting Dems elected in Bubbaland, which is preposterous says Mudcat—just ask West Virginia's Jay Rockefeller and Robert Byrd, the two perennially reelected

KAREN KASMAUSKI / CORBIS

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Democratic senators from what is commonly ridiculed as the most backward state in the country. "No matter how much you sit and talk to these f—ers, they don't understand twofers. It's the goddamndest thing I've ever seen in my life. I go absolutely nuts. Cause they don't think they can do it."

Part of the reason they don't think they can do it, Mudcat says, is they regard Appalachian/bubba voters with condescension. Mudcat blanches at Dems' constantly moaning about such people voting against their economic self-interest by voting for Republicans. While there's something to this, he says, the shopworn class-warfare tropes have proven that they don't work.

Citing Mike Murphy, Republican consultant and sometime WEEKLY STANDARD contributor, Mudcat calls him

> a smart as s— guy who hit it on the f—in' nose as clean as I've ever seen it done. He said, "Democrats go after class, Republicans go after culture." Class only touches a small portion of the white working class electorate. But if you do it from the message of culture, you get them from top to bottom. Because I don't give a f— if Bubba loads the truck or owns the trucking company, he's going to want his gun.

Part of the reason Democrats don't think they can win in Bubbaland, Mudcat says, is they regard these voters with condescension. He blanches at Dems' constantly moaning about such people voting against their economic self-interest by voting for Republicans. While there's something to this, he says, the shopworn class-warfare tropes have proven that they don't work.

Just to illustrate the sort of cultural shorthand by which Dems hand Republicans the truncheon to club them with, he pursues the issue of guns. While nobody's going to take anyone's gun away in a country of 90 million gun owners, he says,

> Why make our members vote for bulls— bills that'll get 'em beat in November? It's all perception—nothing's going to pass. Yet the deal is, Democrats are perceived as anti-gun. And so with a slogan like "Close the gun show loophole," what are the first four words of that? "Close the gun show." Bubba doesn't mind an instant check, but closing the gun show is all he can hear. He doesn't need to hear "loophole," after he's heard the first four words.

As for Barack Obama, Mudcat says, he's got problems in these parts, but not the kind all these out-of-towners think. The Jeremiah Wright scandal? "It's a zero," he says. "Everybody who's gone to church has heard their preacher say crazy things. Listen, I'm probably going to hell. But if I was held accountable for the crazy s— I've heard Baptist preachers say over the years, I'd go straight to the pits of hellfire. I wouldn't even get an accounting."

Mudcat certainly wasn't pleased with Obama's infamous comments at his San Francisco fundraiser about Pennsylvania voters in depressed rural communities: "So it's not surprising then that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." Mudcat and his friends take their guns and God straight, and don't require any chaser of frustration.

But even if Obama's comments lend themselves to Republican attack ads, Mudcat insists he isn't permanently doomed among Appalachian voters. "Listen," says Mudcat, exhaling a fog of Camel smoke, "when Bubba thinks of elitists, he thinks of white guys from Boston like John Kerry. He don't think of a brother. When we think of black guys, we think of oppression." This is confirmed for me anecdotally one day over lunch with one of Mudcat's Republican fishing buddies (they used to gamble $100 a fish). His friend dislikes Obama, but at the elitist charge, he shrugs. "Being an elitist doesn't bother me that much. I know a lot of elitists. When it comes to turkey hunting, Mudcat's an elitist. When it comes to trout fishing, I'm the elitist, cause I can kick his ass."

Mudcat doesn't deny that Obama's race could be a factor. Since Obama doesn't come around Appalachia much, having taken a powder in places like West Virginia and Kentucky, "nobody knows about Obama out here. All we know is that he's black. That's all we know. That's all anyone wants to tell us. The damndest thing I've ever seen. So Hillary defined the debate out here, which boiled down to that she's anti-trade and pro-gun."

Mudcat's eyes grow wild when he says this, as if it's the most preposterous thing he's ever heard. Turns out, it is. "Hillary Clinton a populist?!!! I mean she threw her goddamn rural kickoff at Monsanto's lobbying office on K Street, for chrissakes!" Still, he pays her grudging respect, since cynically pretending you're on the right side beats an open-arms embrace of the wrong one. "I can live with it," he says. But while analysis of why Obama won so few votes in poorer Appalachian counties (where Hillary picked up 71 percent) has focused on race, Mudcat says race is no more a factor here than anywhere else. And there's some evidence to back him.

The website *Daily Yonder*, news outlet of Kentucky's

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Center for Rural Strategies, has done the best analysis of the rural vote this cycle, and it reports that in exit polls, only 20 percent of voters in West Virginia said race was an "important" factor in their decision—overwhelmingly, to vote for Clinton. That's comparable to the 20 percent of voters in New York who said the same thing. But in Obama's home state of Illinois, 23 percent of the electorate said race was important in their decision—and 73 percent of them voted for Obama.

If anyone holds that a black guy can't win in these parts, says Mudcat, then they ought to notify former Virginia governor Doug Wilder, a black guy who won 20 years ago. Wilder, of course, knew how to speak the language and get through to even the most resistant parts of the culture. Mudcat, who volunteered for Wilder's campaign back then, tells a tale, related by a friend who was the candidate's body man as he campaigned in the far corner of southwest Virginia:

> They were striking at Pittston Coal. State police had been sent down 'cause it was getting rowdy. So Wilder comes around this corner—he was a tough guy, that came across. He walks up to these two big-ass United Mine Workers, who wore camouflage and had muscles on their turds, rednecks with chaws of tobacco, and he says, "Y'all from Wise County?" They nodded their heads. And he said, "I understand there ain't no black folks in Wise County." And they nodded their heads again. And he said, "I understand that's why y'all call it Wiiiiiiise County." And then they got to smiling. He said to them, "I also heard you boys at the UMW said you would vote for a N— before you'd vote for a Republican, and I'm here to tell you that this November, you're gonna get your chance."

What Obama needs to do, says Mudcat, is get on the ground regularly in Appalachia and say this: 'If you're not going to vote for me since I'm black, then go to hell. I don't care. But my people are suffering. I've worked in south Chicago, and I've seen their problems. I've been out to rural America, and I've seen your problems, and they're a mirror image of each other.'

Obama, says Mudcat, is a better campaigner than Wilder, "has as gifted a mouth as I've ever heard on anybody, and the guy's IQ is maybe 50 points higher than mine." His problem out here, insists Mudcat, isn't his blackness, but that he ceded too much ground and didn't aggressively go after the vote, as Hillary did, communicating lack of interest. "My take on it is very simple. Who you gonna vote for if you live in Kentucky and the candidate takes off for Oregon? You read in all the local papers that Obama ain't comin' out here and getting your vote, cause he don't think he can win it. Are you gonna vote for the sonofabitch? Hell no!"

You don't have to be of the culture to punch through it (see Hillary), you just have to give it its due, says Mudcat. He puts down a cigarette to let out his feral cat, Kitty, who kills everything from geese to groundhogs, sometimes bringing them back and leaving gutpiles on the porch. "She kills something every day," Mudcat explains. "Go out and kill, Kitty. Bring us something back."

Mudcat grows excited and prescriptive, eager to light a candle rather than curse the darkness. He says he wants me to see something, and walks over to his record stash and opens up the box set of Mac Weisman, the bluegrass singer known as "The Voice with a Heart." This is where Mudcat keeps "my important papers, so I know where to find them." While he's looking through the box, he tells me that rather than writing off Appalachia, as so many think he needs to do, Obama should embrace it. Where others see disadvantage, Mudcat sees opportunity.

What Obama needs to do, says Mudcat, is get on the ground regularly in Appalachia and give a version of the following:

> I'm a black guy, and I promise you I didn't have a thing to do with it. If you're not going to vote for me since I'm black, then go to hell. I don't care. I don't want your vote. But what I'm going to do is this: My people are suffering. I've worked in south Chicago, and I've seen their problems. I've been out to rural America, and I've seen your problems, and they're a mirror image of each other.

Mudcat finds what he's looking for and hands me a 2004 *Wall Street Journal* piece by Jim Webb. Unlike many in his party, fretting that Webb is an ideological outlier who would bring ruin to the ticket, Mudcat thinks Webb ought to bypass vice president so we could "just go ahead and elect him king. . . . He'll bring in some Reagan Democrats, and all those are twofers. Pick up 13 electoral votes in Virginia—big step, Son."

Mudcat offers the piece as a sort of manifesto for what he's calling "The Webb Coalition." There isn't much meat on the bones as yet, but in the piece, Webb sets out to diagnose the problem of Democrats' reaching the "Scots-Irish, along with those others who make up the 'Jacksonian' political culture that has migrated toward the values of this ethnic group." Their issues include intense patriotism and strong opposition to gun control, which "probably cost Mr.

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Gore both his home state of Tennessee and traditionally Democratic West Virginia in 2000."

It's a culture, Webb wrote, "that is so adamantly individualistic that it will never overtly form into one of the many interest groups that dominate Democratic party politics." While the GOP has sought to keep peace with this culture, favoring "guns, God, flag, opposition to abortion, and success in war," Democrats have "consistently alienated this group, to their detriment," partly because of "their shift toward minorities as the foundation of their national electoral strategy."

Mudcat highlights what for him is the money paragraph, the last few sentences, which read,

> The greatest realignment in modern politics would take place rather quickly if the right national leader found a way to bring the Scots-Irish and African Americans to the same table, and so to redefine a formula that has consciously set them apart for the past two centuries.

The thinking goes that the poor whites of Appalachia and inner-city blacks are "spiders on a mirror," in Mudcat's words. Though they couldn't be more divorced culturally, they have many of the same problems, from crumbling infrastructure to poor schools to the need to leave home to find jobs. Obama should set about wedding the two by visiting here and sending active surrogates, says Mudcat, adding that he'd need "good rural surrogates, right-thinking people—people who have faith. If they don't have faith, I don't f—in' want 'em. Faith in the power that can pull us all together."

In both communities, he needs to put forth agendas that highlight their shared afflictions. This is a way of laying the trackwork for a lasting coalition beyond this election between two largely forgotten tribes who've regarded each other with suspicion if they've regarded each other at all. But it also gives Obama, the community organizer from Chicago, a way to demystify himself. Among blacks, of course, this is unnecessary. But among rural whites in Appalachia, he needs a genuine point of entry, a way to find commonality, express empathy, and connect with the culture without shooting a duck or looking like some goofball trying to choke down shots of Canadian whiskey.

While this has been thought of before (Jesse Jackson took a stab at it, with little success), Mudcat says it'll only work with the right national leader. "Is Obama that leader? I don't know." I call Webb's office to fill in the picture a bit, but Webb declines to elaborate. "Webb's comfortable (he thinks!) with Mudcat being his spokesperson on this," an aide tells me, proving perhaps that Webb is even braver than suggested by his status as one of the Vietnam war's most decorated veterans.

I decide to fly Mudcat's Webb Coalition idea by some skeptics. One afternoon at lunch, we are joined by his Republican friend and committed McCain voter Tommy Anderton, who calls himself "Mudcat's haberdasher." Tommy owns the downtown Roanoke store—featuring an oversized Rush Limbaugh banner on its wall—where Mudcat buys all his Carhartt shirts and pants. Sipping our iced teas, with Tommy in seersucker slacks and a navy blazer, Mudcat goes to work on him.

Kentuckians study for their GEDs in a course sponsored by the Christian Appalachian Project, 1992.

KAREN KASMAUSKI / CORBIS

What would happen, he asks Tommy, if Obama sat down before ten white Appalachian males and properly explained the problems their communities share, paying respect to the culture, talking of building coalitions and floating similar policies to transform rural and urban America? Says Tommy, "And what magic drug are you going to give Obama to make him say that?"

Mudcat tells Tommy to put that aside and asks if he thinks Obama could turn two of the ten. "No," says Tommy. "Could he turn one of them?" asks Mudcat. "Yes," says Tommy.

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"If he turns one of them," says Mudcat, satisfied, "he wins the election." It's Mudcat Math: Turn one out of ten Appalachian male voters into an Obama supporter, and you've not only added 10 percent of the white male vote to the Democratic column but slashed the Republicans' share of it by 10 percent. "It's all about twofers, Brotha." Mudcat admits it probably won't happen, but asks, What if it did? "Y'know Mudcat," says Tommy, "If. If the Pilgrims would've shot a cat, what would we be eating for Thanksgiving?"

When I run it by Republican strategists, I get a range of reactions, everything from, Why not, there's nothing to lose since Democrats have no other strategy besides registering new voters and appealing to their traditional base, to: "Boy, Mudcat's selling a pile of s—. Obama can't win those voters because of race." I cite Doug Wilder's win of 20 years ago. "Yeah," says the consultant, "but he was a nonthreatening African American." I respond that aside from his Muslim-sounding name, which even Mudcat admits could give him problems in the area, most wouldn't characterize Obama as "threatening."

"Oh yeah?" says the consultant. "Wait till you see him Photoshopped in a dashiki."

Not everyone, however, is so cynical. Dee Davis, who heads the Center for Rural Strategies, says winning Appalachia isn't even so much about the issues. "Who votes on issues? Please. People vote on iconography, what club they want to be in." Davis agrees with Mudcat that you don't have to be of the culture to grab it. Look at the Kennedys, he said, Jack making serious inroads during his presidential run, Bobby taking his 1968 Poverty Tour to places often unvisited by politicians. On the surface, those two couldn't have been more foreign to the culture of Appalachia.

Yet Davis, who used to deliver furniture for his family's business in rural Kentucky, says,

> You'd go into people's houses and see John and Bobby Kennedy on the wall right next to the praying hands. Bobby wasn't the good 'ol boy, but when he showed up, he showed up. He was willing to listen and be changed by the experience. He didn't have to put on hunting gear and swap knives. He'd go into your kitchen and have a cup of coffee. He came in here with an open mind, and learned, and then went back and did something. John Kennedy won West Virginia. I have some in-laws who to this day refuse to watch the Dallas Cowboys on Thanksgiving because "that's where they killed my president."

Davis says of current Democratic strategy,

> They can say we're never going to win, so why do it? The truth is, if you look in the rural areas of battleground states, it's pretty determinative of who wins elections. Look at Ohio last time. Right now, you hear Dems say they are going to change the map, but they seem to be counting Colorado three times. To pull out of rural Appalachia at this point would be a tactical mistake because people are really hurting, and when they are, they don't tend to return the party in power.

If Obama doesn't start becoming more of a regular in the region, Davis says, he's punting a major opportunity.

> We're changed by seeing art, or hearing music, and we're changed by the people we meet. . . . There are moments when you teach, and moments when you learn. Obama needs to show up and learn. . . . There's things you don't get by reading position papers. There are things people can't slip you on an index card. . . . There are things you understand when you eat a sandwich with someone out of their refrigerator, when you go out hunting with Mudcat. At this point, it's beyond the science of politics, beyond the vote-counting and being seen in media markets in three different places a day. Right now, it's part of being the change you're waiting for.

Back at the house, Mudcat's in a full lather. "C'mon," he commands, taking me up to his office, which is little more than a desk and a graveyard of old computers, mounted buck heads, and his 20 or so sets of Trebark camo hunting gear. He sits down at his wheezing, virus-infected computer. It spits mile-a-minute porn pop-ups and offers for Mudcat to increase his breast size. "Goddamnit," he shouts, convincingly outraged. "I hit every piece of bait the devil ever threw at me except for pornography. I always figured that if you wanted to see a naked woman, go find you one."

Between the pop-ups, Mudcat furiously logs on to election websites, where he spends hours. He shows me choice tidbits, like historic results from Virginia's most Appalachian congressional district, the ninth (known as the Fighting Ninth "because you gotta fight for it," he says), where outcomes constantly seesaw back and forth between Republicans and Democrats. These are not, he maintains, committed Red State voters. Lesson: "They're fickle, Brotha. Go get 'em." To many politicians, rural Appalachian voters are the homeliest girls at the dance. But homely girls like to dance too, they just want to be asked.

As he plays with an Electoral College map, he repeatedly demonstrates how, if Obama doesn't start picking off the Appalachian belt, he's going to have to swing lots more states than Kerry did in 2004. I'm intrigued. Still, all this work is getting in the way of our true business: fishing.

We hit the streams with a gaggle of Mudcat's gregarious and generous friends, half of whom are named "Charlie." Many of them are wealthy, but they are committed gentlemen of leisure, dedicated to the art of angling to the point that some have bought their own trout hatchery on their private limestone stream. On one outing, we hit a fishing spot so choice I'd never be invited back if I published its

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name. I wade into a hole that Mudcat has already worked over for four or so rainbow trout.

Generally speaking, I regard my fly rod as a crack addict regards his crack pipe. It's something I turn to with great regularity. (I caught 1,569 fish on it last year. I kept count.) So I don't typically spook when fishing in front of an audience. But as Mudcat's pals decide to take a creek-side seat, watching me fish as they cut into the beer and bourbon, I start hearing the fishing equivalent of footsteps, with all these mountain boys watching my every move.

One of the Charlies compliments me on throwing a tight loop. But that's about the last of the praise. They start barking sideline instructions. "Cast into the seam. . . . You gotta mend line . . . too much drag." I have one eye on the water, the other on the boys, when my strike indicator bobs a few times, but I'm too slow on the trigger and miss a few fish. "Ohhhhh," they yell in unison each time.

As I keep fishing and am getting skunked, I notice one of the boys sneaking upstream. Shortly thereafter, I hear scattered kerplunks and think the wiseacre is throwing rocks, scaring down prospective fish. But a minute or so later, trout start rising like bombs going off around my waders, which inspires a new round of catcalls. "Yep, no fish in there. . . . It's a dry hole." It turns out the prankster had stashed trout pellets in his beer bottle, and had thrown them in a riffle, which had washed down into my hole. A while later, I take a leaping rainbow trout and a nice-sized brookie on a bead-head zug bug, barely saving my dignity, though one of the Charlies seems cross that I horsed the latter in.

By the next day, I'm again ready to hook into some of their trout. But Mudcat has other ideas. Being a fan of lost causes, he's attracted to one of my own: catching catfish on a fly. Catfish are typically uninterested in artificials, preferring smellier natural baits, so it is extremely uncommon to pursue them on a fly rod. If you mention this quest to other fly fishermen, they grimace—it just isn't done. And why would anyone want to? Catfish are slimy, ugly, and can stick you with their sharp dorsal and pectoral fins. Yet when you catch one, they are strong, tenacious fighters, providing much more pullage than trout or bass of comparable size. Part of the thrill of catching them on a fly is that you're not supposed to.

I have caught eight or ten myself this way, but have been unable to systematically replicate results. So Mudcat proffers: "Screw trout, we're gonna catch you some catfish—on a fly!" He has some ideas. He takes me to a large pond behind the house of his business partner, Richard Wells, who owns a local publishing empire. His *Roanoker* magazine just christened Mudcat "The Most Memorable Roanoker of 2007" (though Wells assures me it was a write-in contest and he didn't fix the vote).

Mudcat asks to take a look at my flies, and settles on a brown woolly bugger, of which he cuts off the tail, to make it look more cylindrical. He tells me to go to it, which I do, sight-casting to large grass carp and channel catfish, their shadows darting through the water. Next, Mudcat starts adding "the secret ingredient"—cylindrical fish pellets—which he throws in by the handful, as he sits with a Camel dangling from his mouth in a lawn chair on a dock, about 50 feet in front of me from the shore.

With the setting sun in my eyes and a glare on the water, I can't quite make out what the fish are doing, though I see plenty of action on top, with fish trying to vacuum up pellets before they sink. Mudcat barks counterintuitive instruction. "Don't retrieve, let her drop, give it time, they'll get it." Sure enough, they do. I first take a six pounder. Moments later, an eight pounder is on my line, which is so feisty—trying to run me under the dock, stopping, then bulldogging me down again—that it takes nearly ten minutes to land it, since I don't want to snap it off on my light tippet.

It's not a bad outing. In 15 minutes or so, Mudcat helped me replicate about one-fifth of my lifetime catfish take on a fly. Of course, he cheated by throwing pellets. But Mudcat is always willing to think outside the lines, sometimes throwing live hellgrammites off a fly rod. Whatever catches fish.

Being a magazine writer by trade, obligated to graft metaphors onto even the most recalcitrant subject matter, I ask Mudcat what we've learned.

"About catching catfish on a fly?" he asks.

"About catching rural Appalachian voters."

"Oh Jay-zuuuusss," he says, wincing, realizing I'm trying to inflict order on his universe, thus justifying our fishing trip to my editors.

I give him a head start: Catfish aren't highly regarded, I tell him, yet they are cagey and smart. They can sample bait by smell without ever mouthing it, making them more resistant to artificial lures than are more prized game fish. I barely have to prompt him. Mudcat revels in the unorthodox. In Ontario, he once took a 25-pound king salmon with a rock as it was headed for a fish ladder where, at the top, it was going to get clubbed with a bat and stripped of its roe. ("I'd never seen one before, so I'm gonna get it, even if I don't have a rod," he explains.)

Catfish, he tells me, warming to his assignment, are a lot like white rural voters: "They gotta feed on the bottom—cause all they get is scraps. But if you're their pal, and you feed 'em what they want—and you gotta feed 'em, you can't goddamn pull it away, you gotta let 'em eat it. . . . If you present enough food out there, you're gonna get 'em in a frenzy, just like those catfish in the pond. And when you hook 'em? They'll take you on a ride." ♦

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Are We Safer?

Yes, George W. Bush has made America more secure since 9/11.

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Are we safer now than we were before 9/11? Safer than before we invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein? Barack Obama insists we are not. Seeing Iraq as the crucible of our growing weakness, the Democratic nominee for president asserts that "we have now spent over $600 billion, thousands of lives lost, and we have not been made more safe . . . [and] al Qaeda's leadership is stronger than ever." According to the senator, moreover, George Bush's policies have also "made Iran stronger"; under his administration Iran has been "able to fund Hezbollah and poses the greatest threat to America and Israel and the Middle East in a generation." Joining Senator John McCain to the president, Obama assails the "Bush-McCain record on protecting this country" and the Arizona Republican for his intention "to double-down on" the "fear-mongering," "saber-rattling," and "failed policies" which endanger the nation.

Now, it is certainly true that the Bush administration in its conduct of both war and diplomacy has too often been inept. Even if the provincial elections in Iraq this fall and the national elections next winter establish a long-lasting means for Sunni-Shiite reconciliation, fortify the country's nascent democracy, and decisively prove the wisdom of the surge last January, President Bush's allowing Iraq to descend into hell in 2004 will likely haunt his legacy. Whether it is Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, extraordinary rendition and the CIA's not-so-secret prisons, or the Patriot Act and the gargantuan Department of Homeland Security, there are many things that thoughtful critics could wish the United States had not done or had done better in the war on terrorism.

But Obama's charge isn't really about the arrogance, clumsiness, and lack of foresight that often characterize presidents and their administrations at war. For him, and many of his supporters, the Bush administration has uniquely and comprehensively degraded the nation's security, especially against the lethal threats emanating from the Middle East. America was much more secure under Hillary Clinton's husband—with the first attack on the World Trade Center, the truck bombing of Khobar Towers, the embassy bombings in Africa, the aborted attempt on the USS *Sullivans* in Aden, the other attempts at millennial bombings in the Middle East and the United States, and the near sinking of the USS *Cole*—on the road to 9/11.

Yet when we look at what George W. Bush has actually done, it's pretty hard not to credit him with *massively* improving America's security, both at home and abroad.

Before 9/11, America's counterterrorist capacities were, to put it politely, disorganized, unfocused, poorly staffed, and poorly run. (The exception was the ever-emotional and self-referential Richard Clarke, the former head of counterterrorism at the National Security Council, who should always get credit for being deadly serious about Islamic terrorism and Osama bin Laden.) The 9/11 Commission report is a chronicle of growing danger unmatched by bureaucratic seriousness or political will. And Bill Clinton, unlike George W. Bush, had nearly eight years to think about Islamic extremism. To President Clinton's credit and great shame, he intellectually understood the nature and horrific potential of bin Ladenism and al Qaeda—as he understood, and regularly tasked his senior officials to explain nationally, the dangers of an increasingly restless Saddam Hussein. Yet he could not summon the fortitude to strike devastatingly against al Qaeda and its Taliban protector or Iraq. Instead in 1998, we had "Operation Infinite Reach" in which cruise missiles were launched at a rock-and-mud Afghan village and a Sudanese pharmaceutical factory that may have had an al Qaeda or Iraqi chemical-weapons connection. Only in the fall of 1999 did a CIA team, timorously, land in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley to meet, but offer no military aid to, the anti-Taliban commander Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Post 9/11, under President Bush, the situation changed drastically, as it certainly would have changed also under a President Gore. What is striking about Obama's Iraq-obsessed critique of the Bush presidency is his unwillingness to give any credit where credit is obviously due. Today in the mainstream press, with its pronounced anti-Bush reflexes, we are more likely to see articles and op-eds about America's unfair and labyrinthine visa system than about its

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effectiveness in our counterterrorism campaign. (And yes, the system is offensive, inflexible, and denies entry to many innocent, talented, and potentially pro-American Arabs, Pakistanis, and Iranians.) But if Obama wins in November, we can be assured that he will leave it in place. It is just too effective in complicating the operational planning of al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

As president, Obama would also likely leave untouched the intelligence and security liaison relationships energetically developed by the Bush administration. Listening to the Illinois senator's speeches about America's current place in the world, one would think because of our many transgressions, we no longer have helpful friends. But if one talks directly to European security and domestic-intelligence services (and my colleague Gary Schmitt and I have spent the last two years visiting these organizations to get a realistic picture of how western Europeans are approaching counterterrorism after 9/11), one cannot avoid the conclusion that America's counterterrorist cooperation with them has blossomed under Bush. It is closer and more amicable today than it was in March 2003 when we invaded Iraq, and the relationships then—especially with the French, our most zealous Iraq war antagonists—were already good.

President Bush would certainly not win a popularity contest anywhere in western Europe (he does a little better the closer one gets to Russia), but the effect of this anti-Bush sentiment on our security and intelligence cooperation has been minimal. Most Europeans don't like the term "global war on terror," seeing counterterrorism primarily as a police exercise and are uncomfortable in their post-Kantian way with bellicose language. (But the Europeans know that without American assistance, they would have great difficulty striking terrorists abroad, as they don't possess the military means to do so.) As was the case before 9/11, the Europeans occasionally express some anxiety about transatlantic cooperation that could lead to death-penalty charges in U.S. courts or military tribunals, but this is usually expressed as a mournful afterthought.

European internal security officers certainly don't dwell on Iraq. They believe that the present generation of Muslim holy warriors—and both European and American security officials regard these European jihadists as the most dangerous of the would-be terrorists out there—are more products of homegrown causes than any American action. European security officials, especially in Great Britain with its large Pakistani immigrant community, put much more emphasis upon the conflict in Afghanistan—the "good war" for most Democrats—as fueling lethal jihadism.

Western Europe is arguably the most important arena for U.S. counterterrorist efforts against operationally active Islamic terrorist groups. (Intelligence sharing during the Cold War was nowhere near this intimate with the continental Europeans.) Obama is not alone in underappreciating what the Europeans are doing for the United States.

Above, British antiterror police outside an Islamic school in East Sussex on September 2, 2006, following a raid by 100 officers. The school was alleged to have been a training ground for Islamic terrorists.

HUGO PHILPOTT / EPA / CORBIS

It is impossible to overstate the importance of Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5, and France's internal security service, the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire, to our fight against al Qaeda and its allied groups. If European-passport holding jihadists get past the European services, the odds are not great that the FBI is going to catch them on this side of the Atlantic. Although the Bureau is certainly a better counterterrorist outfit than it was before 9/11, that difference, given the threat and the enormous

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amount of money spent on homeland security since 2001, isn't inspiring. (Obama could fairly criticize the Bush administration and the Republican-controlled Congress for its post-9/11 handling of the FBI.)

Yet we can search in vain Obama's writings and speeches for serious commentary on Europe, let alone on Europe's essential role in America's defense against Islamic radicalism. Western Europe is arguably the most important arena for U.S. counterterrorist efforts against operationally active Islamic terrorist groups. (Intelligence sharing during the Cold War was nowhere near this intimate with the continental Europeans.) Obama is not alone in under-appreciating what the Europeans are doing for the United States. Focused on the failure of the continental Europeans to fight well—or often at all—in Afghanistan, the American Right tends to overlook their contribution to the larger battle against Islamic extremism. Given the accomplished Europeanists among Obama's advisers, however, it's hard not to suspect that the senator has assiduously been avoiding talking about the European-American counterterrorist partnership because it does not fit so easily into his Iraq-war-has-ruined-our-national-security, the-world-is-ashamed-of-us, al Qaeda-is-winning theme.

Obama insists that the Iraq war has seriously weakened us strategically. But how exactly is this so? According to the senator, the Iraq war caused us to take our eye off Afghanistan and our real enemy al Qaeda—the one in Afghanistan and Pakistan, not the branch in Iraq, which bin Laden constantly refers to, praises, and describes as fighting in the battle that will determine the fate of Islam. "These are the same guys [the Bush administration] who helped to engineer the distraction of the war in Iraq at a time when we could have pinned down the people who actually committed 9/11."

Yet, the Bush administration's mistakes in Afghanistan were not those of focus, but of battlefield tactics, will, and a longstanding, entirely bipartisan, confusion on how to deal with Pakistan. The same guiding lights who deployed too few troops to Iraq earlier sent too few troops unaggressively into Afghanistan. Who knows whether we could have caught or killed bin Laden and the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, at the beginning of the Afghan war if we'd parachuted troops en masse into the flatlands adjacent to the Taliban's capital of Kandahar, where bin Laden often resided? Who knows whether we could have killed bin Laden at Tora Bora if General Tommy Franks had committed large numbers of Special Forces to the fight and not allowed allied Afghan troops to be the primary ground forces in the area? We certainly should have done these things. We were fighting on bin Laden's terrain.

If Al Gore had been president, would he have overruled General Franks's casualty-averse, Special Forces-on-horseback, airpower heavy approach to the Afghan war? It seems unlikely. Would the more dovish and less experienced Barack Obama have questioned and countermanded a ranking general?

Obama has repeatedly said that he would now deploy two additional brigades (roughly 8,000 men) to Afghanistan—a commendable "surge" of troops that is surely needed in the country, and about double the reinforcements so far sent by the Pentagon. But is this really a big part of answering the senator's constant complaint that the Bush administration took its "eye off" al Qaeda? A few thousand more troops in Afghanistan's southern provinces would diminish al Qaeda in Pakistan how? Does he mean that instead of stacking up a couple of hundred CIA case officers in the Green Zone in Baghdad, we should stack up these same men and women in Afghanistan, inside guarded compounds where their English-only abilities get further honed? (If Obama were to attack the Bush administration for its lack of zeal in the reformation of the CIA, especially the clandestine service, where the number of operatives who have any real knowledge of Afghanistan's languages and culture remains—according to case officers currently serving—scandalously small, he would be on firm ground.)

Increasing troop levels in Afghanistan will do little or nothing against al Qaeda in its primary training ground and headquarters: Pakistan. More troops will certainly help thwart the Taliban's ambitions to destabilize larger parts of Afghanistan. But to beat al Qaeda in Central Asia and the subcontinent, we must beat al Qaeda in Pakistan. And we are unlikely to do this anytime soon by opening up secular schools in the North-West Frontier Province (a commendable if unworkable idea of Obama's) or by launching occasional Special Forces strikes into al Qaeda-infested areas of Pakistan, another estimable if mild recommendation from the senator. Targeted assassinations and repeated military strikes against al Qaeda's camps and the affiliated Pakistani tribes can seriously damage the organization. The Bush administration has proven the possibilities of such tactics in Afghanistan and elsewhere by killing off or capturing probably upwards of 80 percent of al Qaeda's command structure and foot soldiers of 2001.

Which brings me to the question of whether Obama believes that with such losses al Qaeda is undiminished since 9/11, when bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri were living in the open and with ease dispatching emissaries. Many of the killed and captured holy warriors were skilled Westernized, globetrotting Arabs and Pakistanis. Al Qaeda is still recruiting and could do horrendous damage to the United States, but does Obama really think al Qaeda's recruitment efforts are "stronger" now after the world's

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principal security services have been focusing on the organization for seven years, and when well-known Islamists and the Arab media are seriously debating the ethics that allow young men and women to slaughter civilians in the name of Allah? Just read the increasingly whiny and apologetic speeches of bin Laden and Zawahiri since 2005. Note their current attempt to headline the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has solicited some derisory commentary from well-known fundamentalists. (In 2001 al Qaeda viewed Zionism as a subset of Western evil, generally not worthy of its loftiest polemics.) How in the world does Obama actually know that the incarceration and treatment of the 9/11 terrorists, which "destroyed our credibility when it comes to the rule of law . . . has given a huge boost to terrorist recruitment in countries that say, 'Look, this is how the United States treats Muslims'"? Are Muslim militants really turning into jihadists because the premier infidel power didn't give Khalid Sheikh Mohammed habeas corpus rights? Does the senator really think that faithful Muslims would embrace the slaughter of innocents if the United States waterboarded him—an interrogation technique that is quite polite compared to the standard interrogative methods of the Arab, Pakistani, and Central Asian security services? Like much of the American left, the senator is imagining his own disgust in the "hearts and minds" of foreign Muslims. Isn't it a big push to suggest that any of this means that al Qaeda and its allied extremist groups committed to jihad against America are in a stronger position now than in 2001 and 2003?

Maliki didn't look like he was enjoying his recent public audience in Tehran with Ali Khamenei, but he didn't buckle before the Iranian cleric, who wants to scuttle any basing agreement or defense pact between the United States and Iraq. After the meeting, Maliki reaffirmed his desire to see Washington and Baghdad sign a defense agreement.

Above, Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei, right, meets with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in Tehran, on September 13, 2006.

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

After launching military strikes against al Qaeda elements in Pakistan, what would the Obama camp do that is so different from what the Bush administration has done or a McCain one would do? Would President Obama really cut off aid to the Pakistani military, a highly imperfect ally in the war on terror? One reason al Qaeda-directed or -inspired suicide bombings skyrocketed in Pakistan in 2007-08 is that the Pakistani government had been challenging the group and its local allies. Another reason is surely that al Qaeda's holy warriors now have great difficulty in attacking the United States and other Western targets, in large part thanks to the Bush administration's counterterrorist efforts and to those of Britain and France.

General Pervez Musharraf may have been fitful and fickle in how he conducted his anti-al Qaeda campaign, but he did earn al Qaeda's wrath. And al Qaeda violence in Pakistan, as in Iraq, appears to be slowly but surely working against the popularity of the organization and its local support, as superbly described in a recent essay, "The Unraveling," by Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank in the *New Republic*.

The increase in violence in Pakistan does not mean we are less safe; it means the Pakistanis are beginning to tackle the excruciatingly difficult problem of extirpating bin Ladenism from regions of the country where it put down deep roots. Jihadist sentiments are now widespread in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the North-West Frontier Province, and even the Punjab, the critical geographic

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and cultural bridge to India. Reversing this growth will likely be an erratic, ugly process as Pakistan's reborn democracy responds to the widespread anger about the American presence in Afghanistan. To local eyes, America is up to no good, the Pashtun Taliban were better Pakistani allies than the current Afghan government with its many pro-Indian Tajiks. With the Taliban in power, the Americans were getting bombed, and Pakistanis weren't deluged with suicide-bombers.

Democratic Pakistan is working hard to reach a modus vivendi with the Taliban militias. If it does, Afghanistan and the Coalition forces will face renewed attack as Pashtuns increase their support of the multiheaded Taliban movement. But if they don't reach an understanding, which seems more and more likely given the intensifying militancy and ambition among the Pakistani Taliban, then democratic Pakistan and its angry army will likely combat the militants who provide al Qaeda sanctuary. This brutal process may immiserate Pakistan and produce small waves of jihadists trying to gain access to the West and attack Americans and Europeans. But this is *progress* even if Barack Obama, who rightly supports the strengthening of democracy in Pakistan, doesn't quite understand what's going on.

But back to Iraq, the supposed epicenter of our newly developed national weakness: Does Obama hear our European and Middle Eastern allies calling for the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq? (The definition of rapid is 16 months, the senator's stated timetable for a "gradual" withdrawal.) If so, he has acute hearing.

Once it became clear to Sunni Arabs that an American withdrawal would lead to the battlefield defeat of Iraq's Sunni Arab minority by Iraq's Shiite Arabs and Kurds, the desire to see the American troops leave Mesopotamia quieted down noticeably. Sunni Arabs are increasingly interested in the clout that might accrue to them through provincial elections in October 2008 and national elections before 2010. (It's amazing how military defeat focuses the mind on more peaceful paths to power.)

Are the emirates of the Persian Gulf or the Saudis asking the Americans to withdraw the Navy from the region? They could do so easily if so inclined. But they know that as long as the U.S. Navy stays, and the American will to use it remains steadfast, the Iranian regime's capacity to intimidate its neighbors remains a dream. Although the surge has so far had little effect on Obama and the Democratic party, its effect on the Middle East—on how Iraqis view us, on how all Arabs view us, and on how Iranians view Iraqis and Americans—has been enormous. We didn't run. We doubled-down. The Sunni Arab press and satellite TV channels are describing Iraq in more normal terms (it's hard for them as the country is full of Shiites, Kurds, and Americans) and is learning to deal, ever more calmly, with the hitherto bizarre situation of having Sunni Arab Iraqis say almost nice things about Americans.

Iraqi Shiites are sending missions to Tehran to complain about Iranian meddling in Iraq's internal affairs. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's military headquarters in Basra, where he personally led the government's operations to secure the city, was shelled with Iranian-supplied weaponry, which, as U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker wryly remarked, no doubt focused the prime minister's attention on the Iranian problem. A tough, independent, sometimes irascible fellow, Maliki didn't look like he was enjoying his recent public audience in Tehran with Ali Khamenei, but he didn't buckle before the Iranian cleric, who wants to scuttle any basing agreement or defense pact between the United States and Iraq. After the meeting, Maliki reaffirmed his desire to see Washington and Baghdad sign a defense agreement. As the *Washington Post* put it, "This would seem to be an obvious U.S. gain in what, according to Senator Barack Obama . . . is the urgent task of countering Iran's attempt to dominate the Middle East." The Bush administration may have a difficult time getting a Status of Forces agreement passed through the Iraqi parliament, given how the issue rubs against Iraqi pride and the maximalist positions the Pentagon always initially takes in such negotiations. This is good. For the first time since the early 1950s, Iraqis are learning—and quickly—how to act as political adults. As Iraqi democracy gains strength, so will Iraqi pride and the ability of Iraqi leaders to make difficult compromises with the United States.

On the ground, the Shiite-led government in Baghdad is, slowly but surely, regaining control of regions of the country once dominated by lawless Shiite militias. The Shiite-led army is, slowly but surely, expanding its operations into Sunni regions of the country and encountering little opposition from armed Sunnis who once allied themselves to al Qaeda. Iraq's oldest Shiite nationalist party, the Dawa, to which the once belittled and now increasingly admired Maliki belongs, may well become the dominant Shiite political party after the national elections in 2009, further intensifying the "Iraqification" of the country's Shiite politics. The Dawa is hardly a bastion of pro-American sentiments, but it is increasingly a redoubt of Iraqi democrats who know that radical, armed Shiite youth are not a reliable political base. On both the Sunni and Shiite sides, older men are regaining the high ground.

The indefatigably anti-American Moktada al-Sadr, who has never shown much fondness for Iranians, is now "studying" in Iran. His political position is in flux and he is persona non grata at the religious schools in Najaf, Iraq's preeminent seat of Shiite education, where his father and his

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philosophically trailblazing father-in-law both gained their fame. Sadr is now employing the old Shiite belief in concealment or "occultation" as a political tactic. This may not work out as well for him as it did for the twelfth Imam, who is more revered today than when he vanished in the ninth century, or Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who became much more powerful exiled in Iraq and France than he had been preaching in Iran in the 1960s. The Iraqi provincial elections will let us know whether the Sadrists can hold their own, or whether the Dawa eats into Sadr's base of support. His personal charisma has certainly taken a hit as the surge has brought greater security to Baghdad's Shia community and eliminated the thuggery that came with Sadrist protection.

To the east in Iran, Mohammad Khatami, the former president, has publicly attacked his own government for "arming and training groups" for missions "in other countries where they wreak destruction and havoc." Hardcore members of the Iranian parliament have demanded that the intelligence ministry investigate Khatami for treason. Khatami, true to form, has quieted down, reaffirming this loyalty to the regime. But if he dared to voice this criticism publicly, we can be sure the senior mullahs of Qom are still saying it privately. (Qom is Iran's center of religious jurisprudence; its leaders have close ties to the divines in Najaf and often cool relations with the politicized clergy in Tehran.) In Sadr City and Basra, the Iranian regime has backed off its support of militant Shiite groups. It's a very good guess that Abd al Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (which was founded in Tehran in 1982), is livid about the cash, weaponry, and training Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps has given to Sadr's followers. Sadr and Hakim loathe each other. The Iranians surely know now they went too far in their attempt to radicalize the Iraqi Shia by encouraging internecine strife.

Obama would be correct in saying that the Iraq war offered clerical Iran an enormous opportunity to get itself into trouble, to unlearn a big lesson of the Iran-Iraq War: Arabism among the Iraqi Shia is real. The age-old Arab-Persian split in Mesopotamia can flair up suddenly, even among Iraqi Shia who have Iranian family members. In its history, the Iranian clerical regime has never had to deal with such a situation, where some of the most respected Shiite jurisprudents are in opposition *and* the Iranian ruling elite can neither shut these opponents down nor even criticize them too severely. Iraq's religious schools are recovering from the Hussein years and are again receiving students from Iran's most prestigious schools. Najaf will inevitably regain some of the centripetal eminence it had in the past. Najaf clerics were instrumental in both of Iran's 20th-century revolutions, and it wouldn't be surprising to see Najaf's disputatious clerics, both Iraqi and Iranian, rock the boat again in Iran (and in Lebanon).

The Iraq war, with the gruesome al Qaeda campaign against both Shiites and Sunnis, has been the backdrop to a complex argument among devout Muslims about divinely sanctioned violence. The Iraqi Shiite religious establishment is not just waging an intellectual battle against the pretensions of Iran's theocracy, but also working with the elected Iraqi parliament and Sunni tribal leaders and anti-al Qaeda Sunni clerics to integrate religious ethics into law. Although most American liberals and conservatives now scoff at the idea, a religious, democratic Iraq could well be transformational for a region where virtually every government lacks legitimacy. In a Middle East that is always rough, corrupt, and illiberal, Iraq is potentially as revolutionary as American-liberated post-fascist Europe. Only now is the country really getting interesting. If democratic Iraq grows stronger—and we will have a pretty good idea of its strength with the coming provincial and national elections—and becomes a philosophical generator of anti-jihadist mores, the Iraqi people will have succeeded rather astonishingly.

When do we get to start asking whether the Iraq war, with its hard-won-however-imperfect democracy, might actually be a good thing, worth the American blood and treasure? If 85 percent of the Iraqis say it was worth the hellacious voyage, and the unelected Sunni Arab rulers of the region say it was not, might we not think with the former? If millions of Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish Iraqis vote in the provincial elections, will Obama really want to say, one month before the U.S. presidential elections, that America's sojourn in Iraq has failed? If Iraq contributes to the current intellectual debates in the Muslim Middle East that seem to be diminishing the ideological appeal of bin Ladenism in Arab lands, might that mean that the bloodshed in Mesopotamia hasn't been a waste?

And speaking of Iran, Obama constantly asserts that the Islamic Republic has been the great beneficiary of America's invasion of Iraq, that things in the region would be so much better if Saddam Hussein were still in power. Leaving aside the issues of intra-Shiite friction and competition and the Muslim soul-searching partly provoked by the Iraq war, is Obama suggesting that the Middle East would be a safer place if Saddam were still with us and he, too, were again developing nuclear and biochemical weapons and could thereby "check" Iranian adventurism?

Clerical Iran's relationship with Syria was ironclad when Saddam was in power—it would not at all be surprising to discover that Syria's North Korean-designed breeder reactor under construction at Dayr az-Zawr was critically aided and approved by the Iranians before Saddam's fall. Saddam's savage aggressiveness—remember it?—was cer-

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tainly one reason the mullahs became serious about developing nuclear weapons (the regime's conception of the Iranian nation as the cutting edge of anti-American, militant Islamic power was another). Damascus was taking a page from Saddam's and the mullahs' playbook: Nuclear weapons are an excellent investment for regimes who see their legitimacy tied directly to their ability to project intimidating force. A nuclear-armed Syrian-Iranian axis could unleash an enormous amount of trouble without fearing military or even economic retaliation from Western or other Middle Eastern states.

Does Obama approve or disapprove of Israel's preemptive strike on Dayr az-Zawr? Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein, a thoughtful dove, reluctantly praised the Israeli attack, which may well have retired Syria's nuclear-weapons program. Is this airstrike within the ballpark of the Illinois senator's idea of "tough diplomacy"? If so, would he then approve of an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities? His speeches and interviews certainly suggest that he views clerical Iran as a much more dangerous threat to America and Israel than Baathist Syria, whose nuclear facility may well have been developed with Iranian aid as part of a covert effort to develop an anti-American, nuclear-armed front in the Middle East. Are preemptive bombing raids okay if done by threatened foreigners? Would Obama have approved of a U.S.-led raid on Dayr az-Zawr? Or would he have described such an attack as unwarranted bellicosity that endangers the United States and the "peace process"? On September 25, 2004, Obama told the *Chicago Tribune* that "Launching some missile strikes into Iran is not the optimal position for us to be in" given the ongoing war in Iraq. "On the other hand, having a radical Muslim theocracy in possession of nuclear weapons is worse." Now that sounds a lot like John McCain's position on Iran, which Obama has described as counterproductive "saber-rattling."

It was the American invasion of Iraq that provoked the Europeans to get serious about their nuclear diplomacy with the mullahs in 2003. Has Obama noticed that as the threat of an American military strike against Tehran's bombmaking plants has faded so has the European resolve to punish the clerics with economy-crushing sanctions?

It just beggars the imagination to believe that Obama actually thinks that Ali Khamenei, Iran's prideful, virulently anti-American clerical overlord, would countenance a personal meeting with an American head of state. Obama has many advisers who served in the Clinton administration, and they have surely told him how unresponsive the clerical regime can be to earnest, friendly entreaties laced with the promise of big carrots. And the Clinton administration tried its hand at engagement when Mohammad Khatami was president, a cleric who will, at least furtively, shake a woman's hand. Over the last three years, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, who was until his recent retirement the State Department's majordomo on Iran, was tireless in his efforts to build a united front against Tehran. If Obama *really* believes his team could do better, be "tougher" than Nick Burns, then he might perhaps explain how.

Whatever new strength Iran has in the region comes not from the American invasion of Iraq—or from Iran's relationship with its always troublesome 25-year-old Lebanese stepchild, Hezbollah—but from its nuclear-weapons program and the nefarious potential it bestows on a government that is willing, as Mohammad Khatami remarked, "to wreak destruction" beyond its borders. The Bush administration has failed to stop this program precisely because the vigorous diplomacy that Barack Obama advocates has not worked. Obama calls for "tough diplomacy," but most Europeans don't want biting sanctions. More eloquently than George Bush, Obama can ask the Europeans for cooperation, but does he really think he could rally the German industrial giant Siemens or the French oil company Total to abandon their Iranian projects because of his personal magnetism? How will he pressure Paris and Berlin to kill these investments? After his public statements, could he plausibly saber-rattle like President Bush, who before the recent National Intelligence Estimate cut his legs off had spooked certain quarters in Tehran with the possibility that he would do to the Iranians what the Israelis did to Saddam Hussein at Osirak and to the Syrians at Dayr az-Zawr? If Obama plans bigger carrots than the Bush administration and the European Union offered the Iranians to stop uranium enrichment, he might consider describing those carrots and to whom in Tehran they will be offered.

Perhaps Obama will just say that diplomacy isn't going to stop the clerical quest for a nuke, and he is unwilling to bomb the Iranian nuclear-weapons facilities because he really doesn't think a nuclear-armed clerical regime is that grave of a menace. It's an excellent bet this is what the senator really believes, although he appears determined not to say so. If he made such a statement now—or even just defined "tough diplomacy"—we could see a meaningful debate between the presidential nominees, assuming the Arizonan really thinks that the only thing worse than preemptive military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities is a clerical regime with a bomb. Perhaps we would have unexpected harmony between the two men, in favor of either preemption or containment. In any case, such a discussion would certainly be more profound than what the Democratic party's choice to be president of the United States has given us so far in his quest to become commander in chief. ♦

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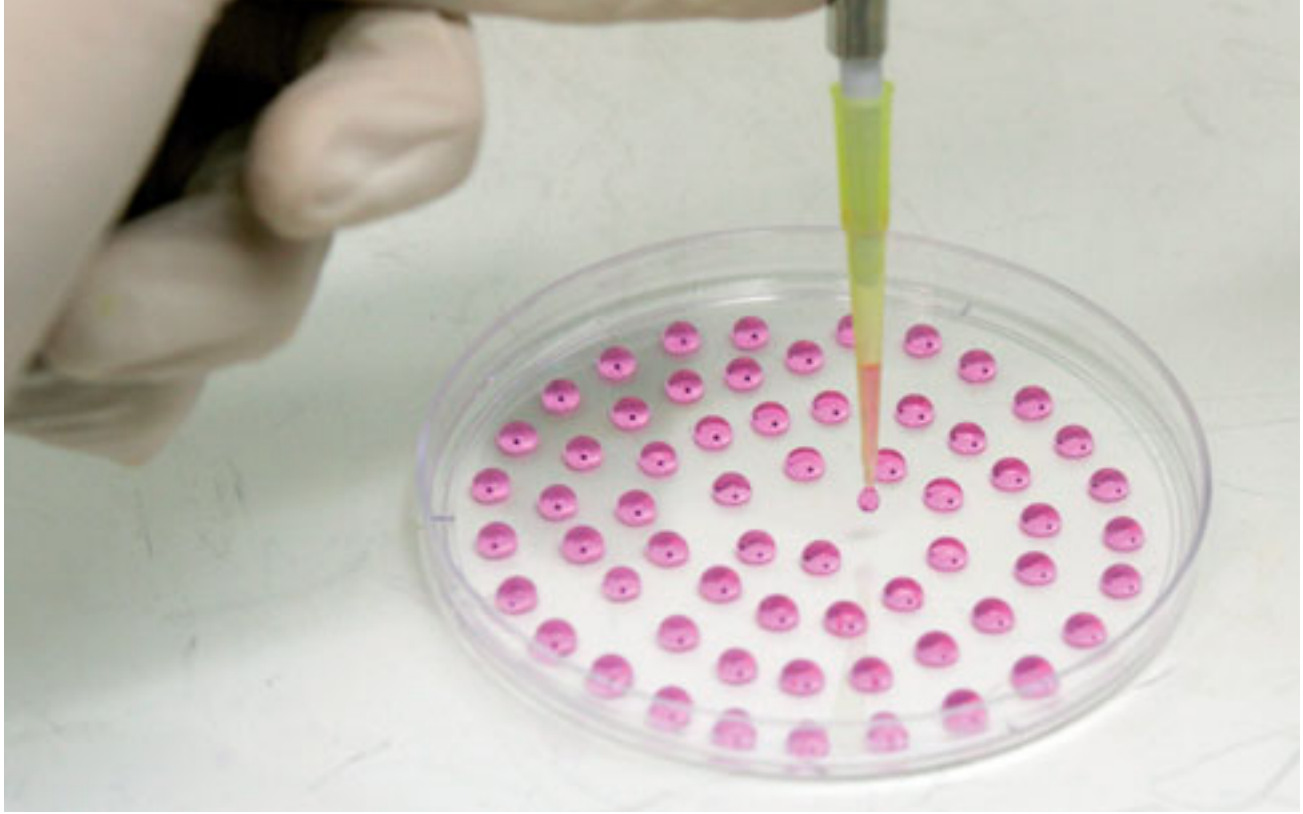

Drops of embryonic stem cells, Hospital do Coracao, Sao Paulo, Brazil

MAURICIO LIMA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Practice Makes Perfect

At what cost to humanity? BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

Imagine it's 1900, and you're a bioethicist. Of course, "bioethics" didn't exist back in 1900—we had real academic disciplines in those days—but play along: You're sitting on a presidential bioethics commission, and scientists show up to testify that a new thing called vaccination could increase life spans by 30 years. Would you judge vaccination unethical? Would you worry about "potentially devastating impacts on the economy, family, and generational relationships"?

If you wouldn't have objected back in 1900, then you can't object in 2008 to the changes being offered by biotechnology. Or so claims Ronald Green in *Babies by Design*. According to Green, those who object to some of today's biotechnological innovations are engaged in "status-quo bias rather than reasoned reflection." Reasoned reflection, according to Green, tells us to make "deliberate interventions in our own and our children's genetic markup—to both prevent disease and enhance human life."

Consider another thought experiment. What would have happened had our ape ancestors, millennia ago, decided that *their* genome was best and did what they could to preserve it, preventing further enhancement? If we don't think the ape genome was best, why should we think *our* current genome is best?

This just-suppose device appears in John Harris's *Enhancing Evolution*, another new volume which insists that concerns about the possibly dehumanizing effects of some biotechnologies are unwarranted. Harris asks, why wait for Mother Nature to improve us? Why not improve ourselves? Indeed, he argues, "there is a positive moral duty to enhance." He longs for the day when we replace "natural selection with deliberate selection, Darwinian evolution with 'enhancement evolution'" and anyone who thinks otherwise is "like our imagined ape ancestor who . . . thought evolution had gone far enough."

Babies by Design
The Ethics of Genetic Choice
by Ronald M. Green
Yale, 288 pp., $26

Enhancing Evolution
The Ethical Case for Making Better People
by John Harris
Princeton, 260 pp., $27.95

Stem Cell Century
Law and Policy for a Breakthrough Technology
by Russell Korobkin and Stephen R. Munzer
Yale, 336 pp., $29.95

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Yet another new book, Russell Korobkin's *Stem Cell Century*, uses the same device. In it, the dean of the Harvard Medical School tells Korobkin that stem cell therapies "have the potential to do for chronic diseases what antibiotics did for infectious diseases." If you don't object to penicillin, then you can't object to the coming "penicillin for Parkinson's." Phrased like that, who could object?

There's something revealing in these new books. They all argue that we have a moral imperative to enhance ourselves, and none of them seriously confronts the concerns that many thoughtful people have about the moral hazards of trying to design a more perfect human. They want to keep the technologies safe and their applications just, to be sure; but they consider these challenges to be easily surmountable. It's as if we've discovered unqualified human goods. Or as Harris puts it, "enhancements are so obviously good for us that it is odd that the idea of enhancement has caused, and still occasions, so much suspicion, fear, and outright hostility."

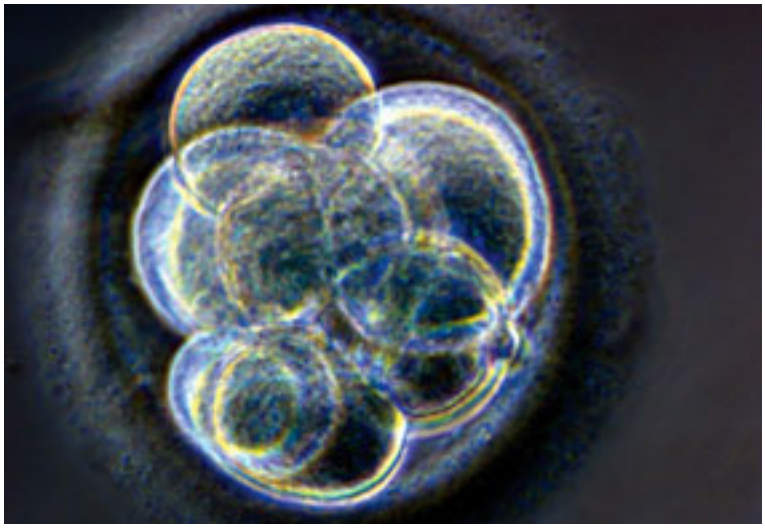
John Harris is no fringe figure. He's professor of bioethics at the University of Manchester and editor in chief of the prestigious *Journal of Medical Ethics*. Green, too, belongs to the mainstream. He is a Dartmouth ethics professor and the founding director of the NIH's Office of Genome Ethics. Korobkin has fewer obvious credentials—admitting on his website that he's been researching stem cells only "for the last two years"—but he is a respectable professor at the respected UCLA School of Law.

The surprisingly unsurprising similarity among these authors is that they consistently present inaccurate, straw-man versions of opposing arguments. Green, for example, dismisses most opposition out of hand—since, after all, "research has repeatedly shown that human beings resist change, even when there is no good reason to do so." Perhaps Green's whatever-we-decide liberalism, like Harris's libertarian utilitarianism, is simply too shallow to produce penetrating arguments or insights.

This should be the first warning sign to anyone sitting on the fence. On one side of the debates are some of the world's most thoughtful scholars: The University of Chicago's Leon Kass, Harvard's Michael Sandel, Johns Hopkins's Francis Fukuyama, and the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas have different political philosophies and different views on bioethical questions, but all recognize that the issues raised by some new biotechnological possibilities are profound and difficult. On the other side are people who see no serious moral issues anywhere in the neighborhood of biotechnology. Why is creating designer babies ethical? Because they'll be free of disease, and who can be against that? Why are genetic enhancements a good idea? Because they'll make us better—and after all, Harris points out, "If it wasn't good for you, it wouldn't be enhancement."

Yet even when their arguments are more substantial, their materialism and utilitarianism are fatally short-sighted. Much of human fulfillment is social, and we have to consider not just material consequences but how certain biotechnologies may transform the social practices and understandings that contribute to our flourishing. For that matter, some moral principles should guide our research, irrespective of the consequences, and we have to consider what type of respect is due human beings simply because of their humanity.

Much genetic therapy will be good, curing a host of genetic diseases. The problem is that it will not be limited to repairing, and not all enhancements will truly enhance. When scientists found that they could treat muscular dystrophy by genetic therapy, healthy athletes began clamoring to use it. But when do therapies become enhancements? Almost all bioethicists think the distinction is largely meaningless. Harris argues that "the overwhelming moral imperative for both" is to "prevent harm and confer benefit." The result, Green claims, is that these therapies could "narrow the gap between society's haves and have-nots and between developed and developing nations" as they "rectify inequalities of birth." History, however, gives us little reason to suppose he is right.



Cloned human embryo

GREG WOOD / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

These books assume a kind of unproblematic Eden awaits us on the far side of biotechnology. Harris predicts parents will "avoid the risk of the genetic roulette that is sexual reproduction." Once all of the options to ensure a genetically healthy child are available, he asks, "could it be ethical *not* to be a designer?" The end result, Green explains, will be a "world where sex is for fun and reproduction usually takes place in the laboratory." Insisting that "parental love almost always prevails," he does not take seriously the possible consequences for our self-understandings and social practices. What attitude is society likely to adopt towards children when they are manufactured in laboratories? Will people tend to start

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viewing offspring as a type of property owned by those who paid for them to be produced? Will strict quality controls be put into place and enforced, as with other products of manufacture? What will be the fate of defectives who, somehow, make it through the production process?

And there is more: Might laboratory reproduction undermine the bonds of marriage and the generational ties between mothers (and fathers) and their children? But the real counterargument isn't consequentialist; it is based on the act, the habits of mind and being, and the virtues and vices involved in viewing another human being as an object of technical manufacture. Witness Harris's defense of gender design: "Just as when I choose a designer shirt or dress I am indulging my taste in some directions at least, so it is with gender choice." Should we mention here that kids aren't designer attire? The problem is that Harris and Green ignore the question of whether human beings possess an intrinsic dignity—a dignity that requires that they be treated as personal subjects (and not manufactured objects) who are brought into the world through a union of parents (not the technical fabrication of scientists).

And then there's the question of what type of enhancements we're likely to make. Do we trust ourselves to know what the ideal designer baby actually is? Libertarians don't trust planned economies; should we plan genomes? Environmentalists don't want to alter the natural ecosystem; should we alter the human organism? While isolated acts of cosmetic enhancement (height, gender, breast size, face, etc.) may improve someone's lot in life, their widespread use will transform our social structures while feeding our baser desires and perpetuating prejudices. What effect will widespread enhancement use have on the disabled, the diseased, the unenhanced, and the dying? Since much of our flourishing is social, considering the broad social effects is imperative.

Yet all three of these titles dismiss these reservations as religious drivel. They *need* the objections to be religious so they can treat them as illegitimate grounds for public policy. But in fact, the leading voices in opposition to genetic engineering all make secular arguments, and Green has to invent his own pseudo-theology to find a counterexample: "We may smile, but for many people the risk of provoking God's anger by genetic engineering is anything but funny." Harris is no better, as he claims religious thinkers argue that "it is tempting fate or divine wrath to play God and intervene in the natural order." But he, too, cites no one who makes these claims. Is any of this true? The late Pope John Paul II taught that genetic therapy should be "considered in principle as desirable, provided that it tends to real promotion of the personal well-being of man, without harming his integrity or worsening his life conditions." Amazingly, Green cites this, yet persists in his provoke-God's-anger rhetoric.

Dolly the cloned sheep

GETTY IMAGES

Meanwhile, Korobkin asserts that respect for the human embryo "is rooted in religious belief that by its very nature cannot be contradicted with analytical reasoning" as he argues that the embryo "lacks every trait that could plausibly be considered a characteristic of human moral value except one: it has human DNA." Harris argues that "if the zygote has value because of its potential to become a person, then whatever has the potential to become a zygote [sperm, egg, skin cells via cloning] shares whatever importance the zygote has."

But the counterargument is not that the human zygote is a potential human being, but a human being—a living member of the species *Homo sapiens* in the earliest stage of his or her natural development. Where sperm and egg are *parts* of larger organisms, the embryo is a *whole* organism that will develop by an internally directed process toward adulthood. Precisely because of what the embryo is *now*—an embryonic human being—we can confidently predict *how* it will develop and *what* its mature stage will be.

Harris concedes that embryos and fetuses may be human beings, but argues that they are not *persons*. Persons are "capable of valuing their own existence," which excludes "embryos, fetuses, and neonates." That's right: Until "neonates"—newborns, infants—can value their own existence, they merit no protection. Most people will find this doctrine, that some human beings are nonpersons, repellant.

So where are we left? "Never before in history have we had anything like this ability to shape the biological inheritance of our children," Green insists—which does rather undo his thought experiment about the 1900 bioethicist. In fact, never before have we had the potential to get things so wrong. One need not agree with Leon Kass, in whole or in part, to think that he deserves something better than Harris's refutations: "This is pure Humpty Dumpty!" and "Well, whatever turns you on, Leon."

Sadly, these volumes seldom rise above such levels of discourse, and all three will leave most readers dissatisfied. At the end of *Stem Cell Century*, Korobkin declares that his "conclusion

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requires abandoning . . . the Kantian imperative . . . and adopting a utilitarian form of analysis." In his mind, it's either Kant or Jeremy Bentham. Green closes *Babies by Design* by proposing that enhancements for designer babies should not "increase unjust inequality and discrimination" but should be "aimed at what is reasonably in the child's best interest." A college sophomore could offer this same advice on a moment's reflection; the real question is what precisely counts as the best interests of the child and society.

Harris's *Enhancing Evolution* also concludes with ethical principles—or principles which people who don't like biotechnology can be ordered to obey. He stresses that there is a "clear moral obligation to participate in medical research"—an obligation that can be coerced. Comparing research to jury duty, he writes: "If compulsion is justifiable in the case of due process, the same or indeed more powerful arguments would surely justify it in the case of science research." At one point, Green writes that he is "struck by how fast the science is moving." And so he should be—for, curiously, all three books appeared as the field of biotech research was changed by the announcement of a way to produce, from skin cells, embryonic-like stem cells without destroying (or even using) embryos.

The main failing here is symptomatic of much modern bioethical thought: These three works assume that human fulfillment consists only in physical and material perfection. Little attention is paid to the virtues and social practices that make for a life well lived. This is true even when Green asserts that biotechnology will "remedy not only physiological imperfections but also some of the serious moral and spiritual problems facing the world community." Really? This would be a more reassuring comment if anything else in Green's pages demonstrated an inclination toward moral reflection. If we can take anything away from thought experiments that transport us back to earlier days, it should be an emphasis on promoting lives of virtue. ♦

Cecil Rhodes in repose

BALDWIN H. WARD & KATHRYN C. WARD / CORBIS

Imperial Man

From Cape to Cairo to the Rhodes-Mandela Trust.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

Rudyard Kipling, a devoted friend of Cecil Rhodes, and himself eventually a Rhodes trustee, stated the 19th-century imperial faith in unforgettable, if impolitic, words:

Take up the White Man's Burden
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard.

Legacy
Cecil Rhodes, the Rhodes Trust and Rhodes Scholarships
by Philip Ziegler
Yale, 400 pp., $45

One who believed in that burden—in his unique fashion—was Rhodes himself. As a teenager of 17 he left his home in an English parsonage to seek his fortune in South Africa, and made it in diamonds and gold. After many drafts of his will, he left the bulk of his wealth to endow scholarships at Oxford for young men of the British empire, the United States, and Germany. From the start, it was to be an Anglo-Saxon male cabal, and he was unapologetic about it.

For later sensibilities, perhaps, this vision carries grating resonances. But the Rhodes Scholarships remain the gold standard, as they were the first, among international scholastic programs. And their tale is told with style by Philip Ziegler, a practiced chronicler of the British gentry. Some of the revelations he offers—he seems to have enjoyed full use of the Rhodes Trust's confidential records—may be of interest mainly to the Rhodes tribe; but others are of general human interest, none more so than the enigmatic personality and purposes of Cecil Rhodes himself.

As he was amassing his fortune, by means mostly fair but occasion-

Edwin M. Yoder Jr., a former editor and columnist in Washington, wrote his reminiscences of Oxford in a memoir, Telling Others What to Think: Recollections of a Pundit *(2004).*

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ally foul, and becoming an influential power in southern Africa, Rhodes kept his eye fixed on a legacy shaped by the imperialist outlook. The initial concept was a secret international society. In a strange and naive passage in one of his wills, he instructed his executor, Lord Rothschild, to dig up the (perhaps imaginary) "constitution" of the Jesuit order and simply substitute "British empire" for "Christian church"! Rhodes's vision is perhaps best appraised now as a "mentality" in the analytical term of the French annalist historians: a creed whose devotees almost unconsciously assumed it to be a fit part of the natural order. The virtues of imperialism came as an unquestioned assumption to Rhodes in the palmy days of the "second" British empire, when a fifth of the planet's dry land and a fourth of its people lived under British dominion—and as a rule not badly, as methods of governance go.

Little even now is known about the origins of Rhodes's obsession to found this legacy. Certainly he believed in the benevolence of British institutions and law. He was a constant reader, it seems, of the *Meditations* of the great Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, imperialist precursor of another empire and age. Perhaps his shaky health had something to do with it. He died early.

Not merely did Rhodes envision a secret order to propagate British rule; he seems even to have thought it imaginable that George III's dissident colonies in America might someday be lured back into the fold. Good advice prevailed with him, and he abandoned the notion of a secret cabal to leave his fortune for a more practical use: scholarships at Oxford. The eligibles stipulated by his will were to be public-spirited, athletic (no "mere bookworms" please), good at literary pursuits, protective of the weak and, above all else, devoted to "the performance of public duties."

The evolved selection process, by committees composed of former scholars but checked by an "outsider" as chairman, has never applied the terms of the will literal-mindedly. And apart from a certain mutual clubbability, there is no uniformity of Rhodes Scholar style or type, countless myths to the contrary notwithstanding. (This reviewer once was amused to hear it said on a television panel discussion, prompted by Bill Clinton's election to the presidency, that Rhodes Scholars must be "thin." But in many years of service on selection committees I never heard a word said about anyone's weight. Mental, yes; bodily, no.)

THE RHODES COLOSSUS

GETTY IMAGES

The dominant imprint on the scholarship program, Ziegler correctly observes, is that of its dedicated administrators, especially one postwar figure who was, for many in the 1950s and after, a great force: Sir Edgar Williams, Warden of Rhodes House and secretary to the Trust for almost three decades. He gets a chapter to himself, deservedly. "Bill" Williams had been an Oxford history don before World War II, then rose to become chief of intelligence to Field Marshal Montgomery and, as such, the youngest brigadier in the British army. As mentor to hundreds of scholars, he was a wry presence who interpreted the Rhodes vision for a less visionary age, always with bone-dry wit and good sense. He once left a luncheon with the words "Well, back to Lenin's tomb"—meaning the monumental Rhodes House, erected in 1929, whose vast unlivable spaces he and his family despised. He liked to tease Americans about politics. "I am a very right-wing Tory," he said one night, "much to the left of anything you have in the U.S." He did not fear the word "elite" so long as that elite did not have "sharp elbows."

What Williams would say of the latest manifestation of the Rhodes legacy, the Rhodes-Mandela Trust, is unknowable. It is a compensatory design hatched by the trustees in part to mark the centennial year (2003) of the scholarships and financed with a pledge of £10 million, the object being to broaden educational chances for young Africans. For Rhodes himself, some evolutions of his vision might impel a few "rhodocycles," defined by one wit as the number of times the Founder would spin in his grave if he knew how his money is being spent. And after more than a century, there is an inevitable and substantial gap between Rhodes's hermetic vision and the programs that mark his legacy. That legacy, indeed, may offer a classic study in serendipity: the chance discovery of the surprising in quest of the expected. ♦

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Tested by Time

Tradition is 'gratitude toward the past and harmony with it.' BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

Man is a rational animal, said Aristotle, who forgot to add, "maybe 45 minutes a day, on a good day." What about something more negotiable, like "traditional animal"? The case has been made by conservative philosophers such as Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, Roger Scruton, and, with one foot still in Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre. But modern urban industrial civilization has specialized in fracturing traditional cultures, a process usually accompanied by convulsions. Modern barbarism, in fact, has taken two forms: fanatical attempts to impose some extreme or purified version of threatened traditions, and fanatical attempts to abolish tradition altogether.

The French Revolution, communism, and similar futuristic experiments that exploded in modernity's face demonstrated that measuring all social customs and institutions by reductive standards of rationality or utility or progress doesn't work. Even progressive politicians now have to admit that traditions anchor identity and basic values in ways that can cancel out calculations of economic self-interest, or the forced march of progress.

On the other hand, even most contemporary Western conservatives are heirs to the Enlightenment premise that time-honored legacies of the past (most of them stoutly defended by conservatives) are subject to irreverent criticism or condemnation, if only in light of what by now can be spoken of as an Enlightenment tradition, an open-minded, questioning, scientific, democratic way of life.

So we are left without the kind of authority tradition once had and the kind of tradition authority once had. We still, of course, have plenty of genial seasonal and ceremonial traditions, ranging from wedding cakes to Christmas trees to New Year's Eve in Times Square to the seventh inning stretch. But tradition itself has needed a philosophy, not just the test of time, for a long time.

Tradition
Concept and Claim
by Josef Pieper
Translated by
E. Christian Kopff
ISI Books, 130 pp., $25

Burke *et al.* can be quoted in tradition's moderate defense; and now, in English, so can Josef Pieper (1904-1997), a modest, self-consciously traditional philosopher. Pieper was an independent German Catholic thinker whose touchstones were Plato and Thomas Aquinas and who established a reputation after the war with a series of popular short books on assorted cultural and ethical topics. The best-known in English is probably *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (published in 1948 and translated in the early 1950s), a cogent case against relentlessly utilitarian approaches to life.

For Pieper, leisure, which is not to be confused with idleness or weekends filled with a frenzy of "leisure activities," is related to both festival and contemplation and the religious origins of each. It is time spent experiencing a harmony with the whole of existence, as opposed to the workaday task of tinkering with or subduing some part of it. Pieper approaches tradition in the same spirit in this little book (first published in German 38 years ago), which is devoid of the portentous density often associated with works of philosophy written in German and, despite a few puzzling or hairsplitting passages, resembles good conversation, wearing its learning lightly, full of arresting quotations and digressions.

Tradition is "society's memory." It's not to be confused with unthinking, obstinate persistence in something because "it's just tradition." It's an expression of a conscious, reflective gratitude toward the past and harmony with it, though not every implicit meaning of a tradition can be articulated or consciously understood while it's being practiced and handed on (and sometimes recast). But Pieper, while conceding the significance of secular traditions, is far more interested in "sacred tradition."

He uses Plato's frequent invocation of the wisdom of "the ancients" and their (in Plato's view) superior attunement to the transcendent origins and meanings of things to establish a parallel between the Platonic tradition in philosophy and the Christian idea of sacred tradition founded in an original revelation. Tradition, in this sense, is a distant echo of divine speech. As such, Pieper argues, it is the archetype of all mythological traditions. The original revelation is, to be sure, in some cases "hidden beneath a thicket of fanciful additions," even "deformed and mangled," like the underwater marble statue of the god in Plato's *Republic*, "its limbs broken to pieces and crusted over with mussels, seaweed, and gravel, so it looks more like a monster than what it really is."

Backhanded as the compliment may seem, it's meant as a form of ecumenical embrace. Pieper thinks all religious traditions, even the divine shenanigans of ancient paganism, and the great Western philosophical and aesthetic traditions as well, share a primary universal aim, the preservation of an original transcendent legacy. "Primordial ideas" like "salvation, disaster, guilt, punishment, harmony, happiness" are found in every mythic tradition and are unconsciously assimilated by individuals so that "de facto we build our lives on them and become at odds with ourselves if we try to live otherwise."

In this context he alludes rather vaguely to the findings of depth psychology and briefly mentions Jung, though he's apparently not endorsing Jung's archetype-filled collective unconscious, just a kind of built-in moral order or

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spiritual compass given in some form to all peoples through their own traditional cultures and myths.

Pieper therefore deplores the "secularizing global civilization" that seems intent on uprooting them, and he uses as an epigraph a passage from Gerhard Krüger in *History and Tradition*: "The only reason we are still alive is our inconsistency in not having actually silenced all tradition." Without its connection to the transcendent tradition, philosophy becomes, in the words of Karl Jaspers, "an increasingly empty seriousness," while art, Pieper implies (quoting Goethe), becomes empty frivolity.

If man really is a tradition-forming, tradition-following animal, we are never going to silence all tradition, but we are always, inevitably, going to be in the elegiac position of Lampedusa's Don Fabrizio in *The Leopard*, watching cherished traditional ways of life slip away into oblivion, since that's how history gets made. But traditions are only really appreciated when they're already fraying and fading. Before that they're hardly recognized as traditions; they're just the way things are.

Who knew daily newspapers were a "traditional print medium," rich in colorful newsroom customs and lore, until they started going under? Who fully savored Wrigley Field as a traditional ballpark until there were hardly any left like it? Who thought of painted pictures as a precious traditional art form until galleries started filling up with stained mattresses and old socks and vials full of the body fluids of "artists"? And who approached religion as traditional mythology when it seemed as solid and immovable as the earth itself—the earth in the traditional medieval cosmology, that is?

Threatened traditions may mutate into rigid fundamentalisms, or they may just be done in by the committees and regulations formed to save them. But the way you know something is a hallowed tradition is that it isn't what it used to be. Then "traditional" suddenly becomes a compliment. I saw a hand-lettered sign outside a gas station recently: "Old-fashioned Full Service." Once upon a time "old-fashioned" was a pejorative, too. ♦

Lessons in Celluloid

Hollywood, history, and the War Between the Takes.

BY MICHAEL TAUBE

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Filming Gone With the Wind, *1939*

Here's a sad but true fact: Popular culture and historical accuracy just don't mix. And one of the main culprits has been (brace yourself) the entertainment industry, which would revise everything from the Dawn of Man to the 2000 presidential election—if given half the chance and a few million bucks. As Michael Medved wrote in *Hollywood vs. America*, "The days when Hollywood captured the imagination of the entire world with stirring accounts of our heroic history have given way to an era of self-flagellation and irresponsible revisionism."

Causes Won, Lost & Forgotten
How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War
by Gary W. Gallagher
UNC Press, 288 pp., $28

Sadder still, the Civil War almost always falls into this wayward category. If you think that an accurate reflection of this important historical period would be a routine procedure, think again. Movie studios and artists have taken it upon themselves to recreate this war in a manner that suits their needs. While it doesn't mean that an alternate reality has been devised in which the Confederate Army is victorious, it does mean that the true historical cause of the Civil War has been lost in the shuffle.

This leads us to Gary W. Gallagher, professor of history at the University of Virginia and a leading Civil War scholar and author. *Causes Won, Lost & Forgotten*

Michael Taube is a public affairs analyst and commentator, and former speechwriter for Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

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sheds light on the common misrepresentations of the conflict between Blue (North) and Gray (South). While freely admitting that he's "trained as neither a film critic nor an art critic," Gallagher has nevertheless produced a superb analysis of a war that defined a nation—but that has lost its definition thanks to liberal amounts of creative license afforded to the celluloid and pen-and-ink crowds.

Gallagher classifies films under four traditions which have underscored Civil War-themed movies and art. There's the Lost Cause, which casts "the South's experiment in nation-building as an admirable struggle against hopeless odds." Next is the Union Cause, which frames "the war as preeminently an effort to maintain a viable republic in the face of secessionist actions." Then there's the Emancipation Cause, which depicts the war as "a struggle to liberate four million slaves and remove a cancerous influence on American society and politics." And last, the Reconciliation Cause, which represents "an attempt by white people North and South to extol the *American* virtues both sides manifested during the war."

In Hollywood's early years, the Lost Cause was dominant in films such as *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Some people vividly remember the positive portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan in the former film and Rhett Butler not giving a damn about Scarlett O'Hara in the latter. But these cinematic masterpieces also "exposed generations of Americans to strongly positive depictions of the Confederacy and the slaveholding South." The Old South was viewed as being both heroic and romantic, passionate discussions of emancipation barely registered, and the Union was often viewed in a negative fashion.

According to Gallagher, *Shenandoah* (1965) represents a "watershed in Hollywood's relationship with the Lost Cause." This popular film is rife with historical inaccuracies. Even though 90 percent of Virginia's military-age white males were conscripted in the Civil War, the Anderson family's five sons somehow avoided it. Integrated U.S. military outfits also magically appeared, defying history and reams of literature. The author places this film squarely in the Emancipation Cause, and argues it "should be considered pre-eminently as an antiwar film."

The Red Badge of Courage, *1951*

Still, *Causes Won, Lost & Forgotten* notes that while "*Shenandoah*'s emancipationist elements built on these insubstantial precedents . . . it remained for *Glory* to thrust the Emancipation Cause into heroic cinematic relief." *Glory* (1989) is the epic story of a mighty struggle to form an all-black regiment—the 54th Massachusetts—in the Union army. The film tugged at heartstrings and introduced audiences to a very different side of the war they knew little about. Only the black soldiers are portrayed in a sympathetic light, along with the sole exception of their white colonel. The white soldiers are depicted in a racist manner which "certainly would have been repellent by modern standards."

Naturally, there are historical inaccuracies in *Glory*. Some examples include: The film portrayed the black soldiers as being former southern slaves, but in reality, most were born free men in the North; the 54th Massachusetts actually came together in 1863, not in 1862 as the film depicted; and Robert Gould Shaw didn't jump at the chance to become the outfit's commanding officer—he initially rejected the posting before eventually agreeing to assume the role. But when the film's producer, Freddie Fields, was asked about these inaccuracies, he brushed them aside:

> You can get bogged down when dealing in history. Our objective was to make a highly entertaining and exciting war movie filled with action and character.

Most Civil War films that have followed *Glory* have been part of either the Emancipation or Reconciliation Cause—even if they had elements of Lost Cause. Two examples of this shift in thinking are *Gettysburg* (1993) and *Gods and Generals* (2003). The former has several Lost Cause themes, including "the idea that Gettysburg represented a dramatic moment when the Confederacy could have established its independence." But Gallagher notes that *Gettysburg* repudiates the Lost Cause in one important respect: "There are innumerable Confederate flags in evidence but no sense of Confederate nationalism animating soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia—many of whom in 1863 would have described the army as the embodiment of their *nation*."

Meanwhile, its prequel, *Gods and Generals*, displays many Lost Cause traits but also "allocates a few minutes to Union motivation," leading to discussions of emancipation. As well, the movie is not a balanced presentation, missing themes like "the thousands of slaves who ran to Union lines," the use of slavery "as a precipitant of secession and war," and "white citizens unhappy with the Confederacy."

Overall, *Gettysburg* and *Gods and Generals* "unfurl a far more conventional reconciliation banner in scenes involving both officers and common soldiers," and the absence of speaking roles for black characters in *Gettysburg* also "sets a reconciliationist tone." Both films may deal with the Lost Cause, yet they aren't Lost Cause films.

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But therein lies a major problem: Gallagher asserts that the Union Cause, which carried the most weight during the Civil War era, has become "Hollywood's real lost cause." Today's entertainment industry has, for the most part, ignored the growth of the Union army and "Lincoln's vision of a democratic nation devoted to economic opportunity." There really haven't been vivid accounts of what it meant for a northern soldier to join the Union army and fight for the American dream.

Even worse, Hollywood has been serving up "a post-Vietnam vision of the Union army as a cruel, racist juggernaut that wreaks havoc and stands for nothing admirable." From *Dances with Wolves* to *Cold Mountain* to *Pharaoh's Army*, the Union is seen as a vicious, bloodthirsty outfit that is hell-bent on destruction rather than its true goal of nation-building. In fact, Gallagher points out the lack of a strong Union theme "must be read on one level as a triumph for the Lost Cause" and a victory for old-style anti-Yankee sentiment.

The art world has also decided against paying homage to the Union Cause. According to Gallagher, the last quarter-century of Civil War art "would warm the hearts of former Confederates who laid the groundwork for the Lost Cause tradition." Civil War artists like Mort Künstler and John Paul Strain have overwhelmingly depicted beautiful portraits and military scenes of famous Confederate military figures like Robert E. Lee, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and J.E.B. Stuart.

Even examples of 19th- and early 20th-century Civil War art show a remarkable dominance of the Lost Cause tradition. Artists such as Everett B.D. Julio and William DeHartburn Washington painted majestic scenes of Lee and Jackson leading the rag-tag Confederate army in battle after battle. They are seen as heroic and pious figures, and typically painted with strong, dominant features and an air of confidence, such as George Bagby Matthews's 1907 masterpiece, *Lee and His Generals*.

Why is there a preference for Confederate art? Gallagher acknowledges that hard data do not exist. But his unscientific study of more than 2,750 advertisements for prints and artwork during 1962-2006 in three magazines (*Civil War Times Illustrated*, *Blue & Gray Magazine*, and *North & South*) suggests that the art-buying public "overwhelmingly prefer Confederate leaders and themes." Reasons for this could range from a broader appeal and admiration for Confederate figures, or even possibly "the romantic underdog aura of the Confederate war that transcends geography."

The Three Stooges at war

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Causes Won, Lost & Forgotten gives credence to the cruel reality that Hollywood and popular art are not portraying the Civil War from a valid historical perspective. True, the goal of film studios and artists is to create subject matter that will appeal to their specific audiences and reap massive profits. They are not historians, and a history lesson is likely the furthest thing from their minds. But if we want history to "come alive," and if we want to learn about the past, the only way to properly do it is to accurately depict individuals as they were and events as they happened.

If the current trend in popular culture continues, fewer and fewer people will understand what the Union and Confederate causes were about, and why the Civil War was fought in the first place. ♦

Tillion's Cousins

A classic account of women in the Mediterranean world. **BY ANN MARLOWE**

In 1966 Germaine Tillion, a 59-year-old French structural anthropologist, published a slim volume entitled *Le harem et les cousins* (English title: *The Republic of Cousins*). This book, and Tillion herself, are largely unknown in the United States outside academic circles. Yet 40 years after its publication, *The Republic of Cousins* offers fresh and even startling insights into the Muslim world.

The "republic" Tillion depicts is a construction based on the seclusion of women, near-incestuous marriages, honor killings, and the obsessive concern of brothers for their sisters' honor. It is common to the Christian northern borders of the Mediterranean as well as the Muslim southern and eastern shores. Many of Tillion's most startling examples come from southern France—where uncle/niece marriages were still

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taking place before World War II—and from Christian Lebanon where, she reports, spouses habitually call one another "cousin."

Tillion, who died in April just short of her 101st birthday, was well known in France—but for her courage and political engagement more than her work in anthropology. She was one of 61 people, and only five women, to hold the Grand Cross of the Legion d'Honneur. As a Resistance heroine who survived a concentration camp and went on to play a controversial role in the Algerian war, she was also a quintessential French public intellectual. Tillion was the subject of a 1974 television documentary, *Un certain regard*, and two books by Jean Lacouture.

Tillion did her research in rural Algeria from 1934 to 1940. But her life then took a drastic turn away from academia: Returning to France, she joined the Resistance, was betrayed by a priest, condemned to death, and interned at Ravensbruck during 1942-45. Her mother, who was also arrested, died there. Tillion spent much of the postwar period documenting the atrocities she witnessed. Her memoir *Ravensbruck* was published in 1958; she would later rewrite it twice. It made her famous.

Then, already a public figure, she returned to Algeria in 1954 as a government emissary, attempting to improve the situation of women and mitigate the excesses of both sides. Tillion ended up as one of the staunchest opponents of the French use of torture. Although the war in Algeria is mentioned mainly in footnotes in *The Republic of Cousins*, it shadows every page. And in the context of 1966 France, with the wounds of that savage conflict still fresh, Tillion's matter-of-fact, evenhanded treatment of Christian and Muslim social arrangements is impressive.

Tillion's aim was to demystify the institution of the harem by explaining it—and the explanation turned out to revolve around cousin marriage, or what she called "saving all of the girls of the family for the boys of the family." Her thesis is that in societies where women have inheritance rights (and giving daughters half the portion of sons was one of Mohammed's great breaks with Arab tribal codes), they are married off to paternal first cousins wherever possible. This keeps the family's land in the patrilineage.

It also leads to a number of idiosyncrasies now identified with Muslim societies but formerly found in southern France, Italy, Greece, and Spain. To prevent exogamy, daughters are secluded, and while they may attend school or even work, their social contacts will be limited to men in their immediate family and close cousins.

Tillion's aim was to demystify the harem—and the explanation turned out to revolve around cousin marriage, or what she called "saving all of the girls of the family for the boys of the family."

Forty years later, Tillion's analysis of endogamous marriage and the seclusion of women has still not been assimilated into the common stock of wisdom about the Arab world or ours. One of the shocks of *The Republic of Cousins* is that it is as much a reaction to Tillion's upbringing in the Auvergne, in southern France, as it is to her experiences among the Berber nomads of Algeria, whom she studied for her fieldwork.

Tillion is undeniably correct in pointing out that close cousin marriage correlates heavily with the Islamic and Mediterranean world: It is well established that between 20 and 60 percent of marriages in most of the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are between first or second cousins. Even in the Western diaspora this tradition persists: 55 percent of British Pakistanis are married to their first cousins, and the number in Bradford may approach 75 percent, as the BBC reported in 2005. Tillion also cites statistics on endogamous marriage in France, which diminished precipitously after 1945.

Tillion's most useful contribution may be looking beyond the abstractions of "Islam" and "the West" or "the Judeo-Christian tradition" to an earlier shared past in which pig bones do not appear in Neolithic remains around the Mediterranean, long before the Judeo-Islamic ban on eating pork. Tillion points out that circumcision of boys predates Islam; it is never mentioned in the Koran, though all male Muslims are circumcised as surely as male Jews. These facts might suggest grounds for understanding and dialogue. Indeed, in January 2004, the Palestinian sociologist Salim Tamari proposed a far-reaching way of rethinking Arab identity, suggested by Tillion's thought: "It is possible today for many Arabs to define themselves as Arabs and Mediterraneans, without abandoning their affinities with other non-Mediterranean Arabs."

You might expect that a writer dealing with such *au courant* subject matter would be widely read in English, but Tillion's reputation has not been helped by the obscurity of her publishers, London-based Al Saqi Books. This small house was started by the Iraqi intellectual Kanan Makiya and some of his friends in 1978 and has published significant Arabic works in English and European language works in Arabic. *The Republic of Cousins* was last printed by Al Saqi in 2000. The translation, by Quintin Hoare, carries a subtitle that is absent from the original: "Women's Oppression in Mediterranean Society." While this was doubtless well meant at the time, now it suggests a dated feminist tract. It has been out of print for some time, and never sold enough copies in English to have an impact.

In the light of current events, even Tamari's modest goal of a dual identity for Mediterranean Arabs may seem distant. But it is worth thinking about as an alternative to the sterile opposition between "Islam" and "the West," and the bankrupt models for Arab and Muslim identity current on the Arab street. Germaine Tillion's work suggests that there are fresh approaches possible, if only we have the imagination for them. ♦

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Raising the Bar

Young Genghis Khan. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Twenty-five years ago, at a moment when the publishing industry had gone mad for magazine and newspaper parodies, I wrote a proposal for a parody of *TV Guide*, then the most popular weekly in America. Unfortunately for me, some *National Lampoon* writers had the same idea the same week. They got the publisher, I didn't, and so my spoof never saw the light of day. (I must report with more than a trace of *schadenfreude* that the *National Lampoon* version was a disaster.) One of my parody listings was for a made-for-television movie airing Tuesday night at 9 on CBS starring Ed Asner and Cloris Leachman. It was called *We're Gonna Beat This Thing: The Alexander Solzhenitsyn Story.*

This only minimally fanciful conceit—at the time, Ed Asner had won seven Emmys and was considered television's most distinguished actor—came rushing back when I saw *Mongol*, one of this year's Oscar-nominated foreign films. At first blush, it could not be more different from a TV movie of the 1980s. *Mongol* has a Russian director, a Japanese star, is in Mongolian, and was produced in part by the National Film Commission of Kazakhstan. It attempts to chronicle the true story of the rise of Genghis Khan, filmed on and around the untouched Mongolian steppe. The images have a stunning rarity to them, since Mongolia was closed off to the outside world for most of the 20th century. The powerful and very bloody battle scenes are eye-catching, stirring, and chilling. Even the subtitles are handled beautifully, popping up all over the screen to ensure they are not lost in scenes in which snow and white fur dominate the lower part of the frame.

Mongol
Directed by Sergei Bodrov

Dramatically, however, the movie is a welter of embarrassing clichés. Genghis is paired off with a sassy, politically savvy wife notable for her complete lack of subservience to the man who put the bar in barbarian. And given the amount of time devoted to the many ways in which young Mongols were taken prisoner in the 12th century, it could have been called *We're Gonna Beat This Thing: The Genghis Khan Story*.

Time and again, as a preteen with flowing black locks, young Genghis finds himself in some form of imprisonment, usually with a wooden stock around his neck. Somehow, he manages to get himself extricated from the wooden stock only to find himself in it once again. After a while, it looks like a hip new Lower East Side necklace. A few years later, he becomes a man—actually, since the adult actor playing him is 31, he seems to have fallen asleep for a decade or two like Rip Van Winkle—and to celebrate his coming-of-advanced-age he gets a steel ring slapped around his neck before he is thrown in a jail cell for a few years.

Through it all, Genghis is motivated only by love—love for the wife he chose for himself when he was nine, goes to war to save, and by whom he is saved in return from one of his innumerable incarcerations. Yes, the man who brought raping and pillaging to a whole new level as he swept across Asia is portrayed here as monogamous to a fault—even to the point of accepting as his own a child born to his wife during a period of sexual servitude.

It is unlikely, in the extreme, that the real Genghis Khan was quite so evolved about the role of the women in his life. But who cares about the women in Genghis Khan's life, anyway? One doesn't attend a movie about Genghis Khan because one is interested in the domestic manners of the Mongolians. One wants to see how he became a conqueror. And this crucial detail is entirely missing from the script by director Sergei Bodrov and Arif Aliyev. After 90 minutes of jail and more jail, Genghis finally sets himself to the task of uniting the Mongol clans. He rides away from the missus and the kids—and then we cut forward to six years later, when he has an army of thousands and is preparing to wage war against the remaining Mongol holdouts before he proceeds to take over much of the known world.

Why any of these people have decided to follow him, and what happened as he gathered supporters along the way, is entirely absent from the film. *Mongol* is supposedly the first of a trilogy of films about the life of Genghis Khan. If Bodrov and Aliyev are unable even to imagine just what qualities of character and leadership made their subject one of the most formidable human beings ever to walk the earth, there doesn't seem much reason to go on with their project.

Picnic on the Steppes

PICTUREHOUSE

Now, if Ed Asner had played him back in the early 1980s, that would have been something to see. ♦

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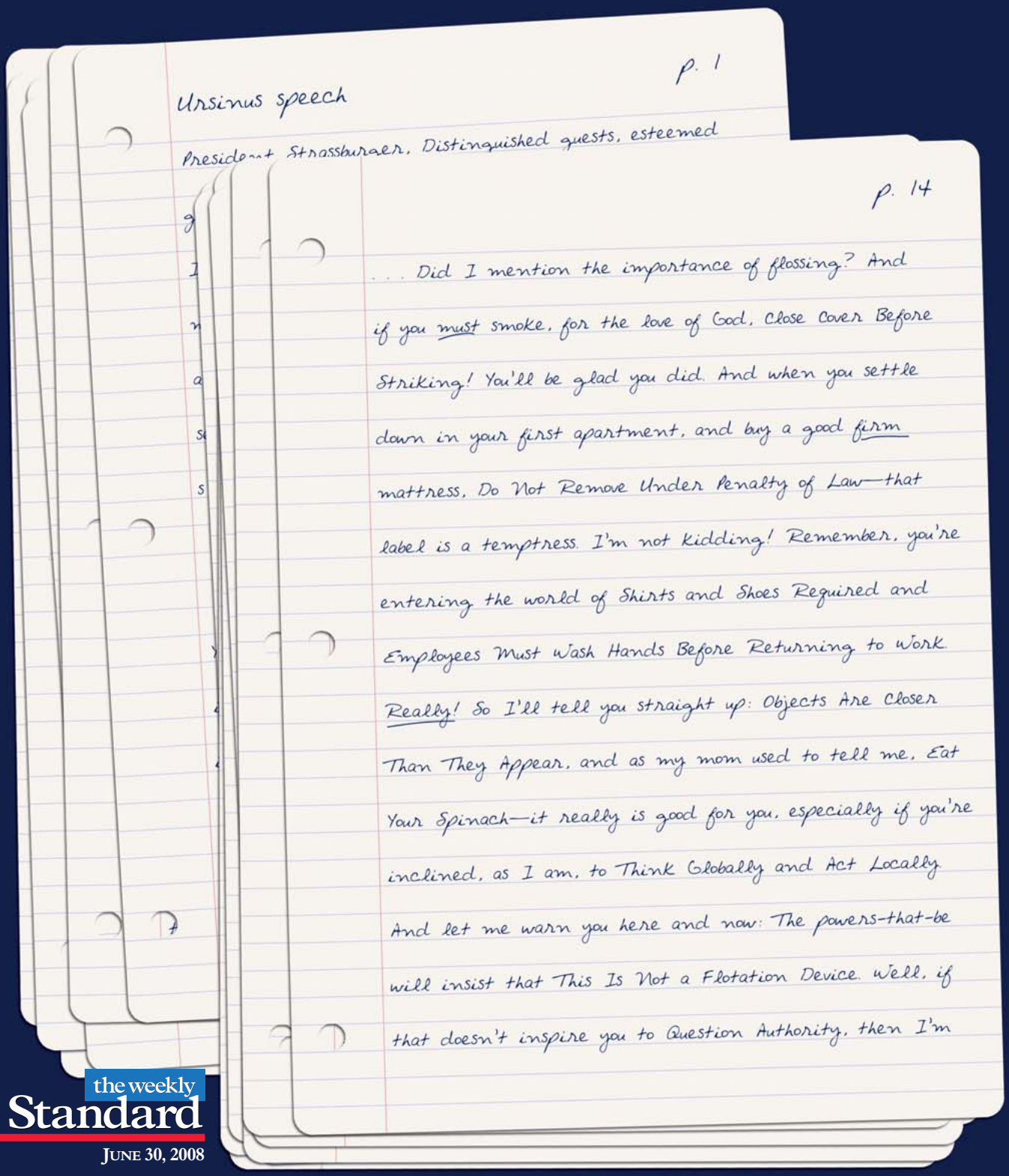
Parody

"In the end, we are our habits, so take time developing good ones. . . . Some of these are obvious. No joke, don't smoke! Also, don't type IMs while you drive. Get in the habit of sports and exercise—by your 10th reunion, you'll know who has and hasn't, and you'll know even more each subsequent one. . . .

"Get in the habit of being excited. It's a great big world, with no excuse for being bored. It's fun to have feuds and enemies—I've had my share—but break the habit of nursing grudges. Here's one tip: Always write angry letters to your enemies, but never mail them. . . ."

—James Fallows, commencement address, Ursinus College, May 17, 2008



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Ursinus speech

President Strassburger, Distinguished guests, esteemed

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. . . Did I mention the importance of flossing? And if you must smoke, for the love of God, Close Cover Before Striking! You'll be glad you did. And when you settle down in your first apartment, and buy a good firm mattress, Do Not Remove Under Penalty of Law—that label is a temptress. I'm not kidding! Remember, you're entering the world of Shirts and Shoes Required and Employees Must Wash Hands Before Returning to Work. Really! So I'll tell you straight up: Objects Are Closer Than They Appear, and as my mom used to tell me, Eat Your Spinach—it really is good for you, especially if you're inclined, as I am, to Think Globally and Act Locally. And let me warn you here and now: The powers-that-be will insist that This Is Not a Flotation Device. Well, if that doesn't inspire you to Question Authority, then I'm

the weekly Standard
June 30, 2008

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